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**Front Cover:** Town of Palma del Río, birthplace of Cabrillo, photos by Rafael Morales. Document containing Cabrillo’s testimony in Cádiz, February 22, 1532, in which he states that he is a native (*natural*) of Palma de Micer Gilio (Palma del Río), courtesy of the Archive General de Indias, Justicia 707, N.6, image 25. Overlay of Cabrillo’s landing in 1542 as filmed in August 2016 by the National Park Service.

**Back Cover:** Surfers, La Jolla Shore, San Diego, California, Photo by Sebastien Burel, Adobe Stock.

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Articles appearing in *The Journal of San Diego History* are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*.

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Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, Citizen of Guatemala and Native of Palma del Río: New Sources from the Sixteenth Century

By Wendy Kramer

Introduction

New technology affords new opportunities as well as new situations to historians engaged in archival research. Frequently today, exciting findings are encountered in digital format, often online, in isolation in front of a screen, and not in some timeless archive reading room, leafing through a bundle of ancient manuscripts. So it has been with this recent research that I have been conducting, and last year, the news of my discovery of some documents in which Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo declared himself a native of Palma de Micer Gilio, modern-day Palma del Río in Cordoba, Spain, generated considerable interest—the international press and digital media reported it worldwide. This particular item was considered newsworthy not only in California but throughout Latin America, Spain and Portugal.

Since the early 1980s, when I was based in Seville and carrying out research at the General Archive of the Indies (hereafter the AGI), I have been assembling biographical data on the first generation of conquistador-encomenderos who accompanied Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers to Guatemala in the 1520s and 1530s, sent there by Hernán Cortés from Mexico. Recently, I renewed efforts...
to complete these social histories, working with the early Cabildo books housed in the Hispanic Society of America in New York City. Sources like the Cabildo books record detailed chronological information on a town’s inhabitants and their participation in town affairs.

Working alphabetically I reached the letter “C” and the name of the legal representative, the Procurador of Guatemala, appointed in 1531, a Gabriel de Cabrera. While doing a random online search on the AGI website, I came across five or more separate documents mentioning criminal activity aboard the ship on which Cabrera was carrying gold to the Spanish Crown. The investigation on the ship concerned gold that he transported from Guatemala overland to Veracruz, Mexico and from there by ship to Seville, Spain. As the Procurador, a royal agent, Cabrera had been commissioned to journey back to Spain in 1531-1532 with what was actually the first shipment of gold sent since initial contact and conquest. First contact occurred in 1524 between the Maya-Pipil of Mesoamerica and the European conquistadors, led by the ambitious, heartless, and relentless captain and military leader, Pedro de Alvarado.

Reading the online digitized documents about the case and the proceedings concerned with appearance of witnesses and their questioning, I was surprised to learn that Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo was a passenger on the ship, travelling to Spain with some other citizens of Guatemala. Along with the passengers and crew, Cabrillo was interrogated about a theft, and asked to testify about what he witnessed on the ship.

I offer additional background on my areas of research and prior acquaintance with Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo to contextualize the circumstances of this finding. Cabrillo was a conquistador and an encomendero of Guatemala, and although he held a large encomienda, it was his prominent position heading the expedition of discovery to the Pacific Coast of California in 1542 that distinguished him as an important historical figure. While conducting research in the AGI in the early 1980s on the encomenderos of Guatemala, I met historian Harry Kelsey, who was doing research for his detailed book on the life of Cabrillo. So Cabrillo had been a topic of interest for a long time and I was certainly intrigued that, unlike most of the conquerors of Guatemala, his place of birth and country of origin had not been ascertained. Modern historians turned up insubstantial evidence for his logical place of birth—Spain but the similarly insubstantial evidence for his alleged birthplace, Portugal, meant that the issue was unresolved.

Antonio de Herrera, royal historian of Spain, sixty years after Cabrillo’s death, published that the captain of the San Salvador was “Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo Portugues.” Herrera’s source for this designation was not given and since then no one has verified his claim that Cabrillo was Portuguese. This pronouncement,
made much later, was apparently not credited by the Costa Rican diplomat and historian, Manuel María de Peralta (1847-1930), who in a book of sixteenth century documents from the Spanish archives that he edited and published almost 300 years later in 1883, referenced Cabrillo in the following way: “Before [Sir Francis] Drake, only a distinguished Spanish sailor, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, had ventured into such high latitudes on the western coast of North America, in a voyage of reconnaissance of the California coastline commissioned by the Viceroy of Mexico don Antonio de Mendoza, in whose honor Cape Mendocino received its name (1542).”\(^{15}\)

Harry Kelsey, writing in 1986, noted that Cabrillo’s own family and offspring and those who knew him in Santiago de Guatemala, never mentioned that he was Portuguese. This is remarkable because in the conquest of New Spain, the largest group of foreigners were the Portuguese conquistadors, and information of this type was not generally concealed.\(^{16}\) Among the documentation submitted to the Crown in the sixteenth century by conquistadors and their descendants to prove their services in the conquest, place of birth is frequently mentioned either by them or by their witnesses.\(^{17}\)

In the first Guatemalan Cabildo book, there is record in March and April 1528 of “Domingo Portugués” who was granted a house plot, and “Juan Alvares, Portugués” who was given agricultural land.\(^{18}\) The list of deceased persons’ estates in Guatemala for the years 1536 and 1537 includes reference to an “Andrés Jorge, Portugués” and an “Álvaro Gonzales, Portugués,” the latter recorded as being from the Kingdom of Portugal from a place called Freixo de Espada à Cinta.\(^{19}\)

**Gabriel Cabrera, Procurador of Guatemala, and Robbery on Board the San Juan**

The new sources that have recently come to light address some of the errors and lacunae in the historiography of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, particularly from the period of the 1530s and 1540s. At present, there is little controversy concerning the circumstances of Cabrillo’s participation in the conquest of Mexico under Hernán Cortés nor his journey to Guatemala under Pedro de Alvarado in 1524. Cabrillo first engaged in farming and ranching in Guatemala on lands and encomiendas granted to him by Alvarado in the late 1520s. He probably received permission to look for gold in streams near to his encomienda in 1529.\(^{20}\) The success of Cabrillo and his partner Diego Sanchez de Ortega in certain mining operations no doubt led to his decision to return to Spain to marry Diego’s sister Beatríz Sánchez de Ortega in Seville, Spain. This trip has been alluded to in several documents but little or no documentation had been located to do with his activities while
in Seville, until now.\textsuperscript{21} The documents examined here give us some new insight into his activities after he left Guatemala in the summer of 1531 to seek the first available ship to Spain that was departing from the port of Veracruz.\textsuperscript{22}

More than five documents in the \textit{Justicia} section of the AGI contain materials that pertain to the criminal investigation aboard the ship \textit{San Juan}, which commenced in November 1531 in the first port of call, Havana.\textsuperscript{23} The investigation was concerned with the theft of gold bars that the Procurador of Guatemala was transporting to deliver to the Spanish Crown, as the Crown’s share of this first shipment of gold.\textsuperscript{24}

Throughout the protracted proceedings in Havana, Tenerife, Cádiz, and Seville, Cabrillo and other fellow passengers from Guatemala, as well as sailors and crew, were asked to testify on numerous occasions. Like the other witnesses, Cabrillo was sworn in and answered all questions under oath while the official scribes dutifully recorded all of his responses verbatim. Three documents in particular provide five different examples of Cabrillo’s testimony in which it was recorded that his full name was Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo and that he was a native of Palma de Micer Gilio. Cabrillo also gave testimony elsewhere in the same case, and also in a power of attorney, under the names: “Juan Rodríguez,” “Juan Rodríguez, merchant,” and Juan Rodríguez, squire.”\textsuperscript{25} There are at least nine statements from him within these official documents housed in the AGI.

In addition to Procurador Cabrera and Cabrillo (from Palma de Micer Gilio), the following citizens of Guatemala also travelled to Spain from Veracruz on the \textit{San Juan}: Juan Ortega (from Madragal and a servant of the Governor of Guatemala); Eugenio de Moscoso (from Ciudad Real) and his servant Juan Borgoñon (from Burgundy); and Diego Sánchez de Santiago (from Jerez de la Frontera).\textsuperscript{26} These men were called upon to give testimony as the case dragged on through the different ports of call, then in Spain and eventually back in Guatemala.

The expedition had travelled overland to Mexico from Guatemala, crossing rivers and rough roads for more than 200 leagues. While they were waiting for the ship to depart, Cabrillo and Cabrera spent several days together in Veracruz buying provisions for the journey.\textsuperscript{27} The Procurador had with him two large boxes containing gold samples for the Crown as well as another box with his own gold and precious items. In addition, he was carrying formal documents and letters from Spanish citizens, the Royal Officials and the Cabildo.

Cabrillo and others testified that he personally was put in charge of safeguarding a suitcase with official papers and jewels for the Procurador while they were on the \textit{San Juan}. He also testified that he had met Cabrera some twelve to thirteen years before in Cuba, and although Cabrillo did not seem to share quarters on the ship nor eat his meals with him (like the other citizen of Guatemala,
Eugenio de Moscoso), it was obvious that they shared a cordial relationship and a bond of trust. In his testimony Cabrillo noted that Cabrera and Moscoso were actually travelling together on the ship as partners.  

Cabrillo and others testified that the boxes laden with the Crown’s gold were tied up and sewn, using native cloth and wrapped in deer skin and with floating devices attached to them, so that in case the ship capsized the contents might survive. Most surprisingly, the Procurador also brought on board a so-called tigre (tiger) for whose freight he paid 10 pesos. History has not revealed the fate of this Central American jaguar, but it was probably one of the first large wild cats taken to Spain from the New World.

Some of the crew members were, no doubt, rough types, and the Procurador later described them as “hijos de muchas madres” (sons of many mothers). He had an altercation with the boatswain, Pedro de Ochoa, a few days after they set sail from Veracruz; the Procurador was not satisfied with the location Ochoa had stored the two boxes containing the Crown’s gold. Later, as the case became more complicated after arrival in Spain and the intervention of the officials from the House of Trade (Casa de Contratación), Cabrera as Procurador, in turn, had to defend himself from accusations that he had not properly supervised the items for which he was responsible, and that he had taken much better care of his own valuables. He defended himself partly by saying that he was at the mercy of the ship’s crew, and had no reason initially to suspect any malfeasance on their part and in addition he was practically unconscious from sea sickness during the voyage.

The theft was discovered shortly after the ship docked in San Cristóbal de la Havana. Cabrillo testified that it was while he was on shore that someone came and notified him that one of the boxes had been broken open and that some of the contents had been removed. Seven bars of gold went missing from one of the Crown’s boxes, totalling some 1,000 pesos in value. On November 9, 1531, a senior officer from the island of Cuba began an investigation into the theft. All boxes were opened and searched and passengers and crew gave testimony about what they had seen and heard. The finger was pointed at the boatswain, Pedro de Ochoa. Apparently, it was well-known on the ship that Ochoa had previously been accused of being a thief and of having “bad hands” (malas manos).

There is some interesting eyewitness testimony about the actual sequence of events of the theft, which took place late at night by candlelight. There is also vehement dialogue among several of the implicated crew members that is cited verbatim, with statements such as “for the love of God” and “shut up” and “I will kill you if you say anything.” Ochoa was strung up and tortured with “jugs of water,” which must be similar to modern-day water boarding, and some 20 jugs
of water were poured down his throat to help extract a confession. When none was forthcoming, they used another form of torture, which is referred to as “fire
torture.” Another crew mate was whipped to get a statement. Then the suspected crew members were imprisoned on board the ship with orders to deliver them to officials at the House of Trade in Seville.33

The San Juan continued its journey docking next in the Canary Islands, sometime in mid January 1532. Judges from the Apellate Court in Santa Cruz de Tenerife were asked by the Guatemalan Procurador Cabrera to intervene, and the prisoners were taken on land and jailed. The ship docked and the sails, lowered and removed, were placed on land by order of the Municipal Officer in Santa Cruz while an investigation took place.

Cabrillo and the other passengers and crew must have been exhausted by the voyage without end, and likely there were additional expenses being incurred with the long delay. While docked in Tenerife, Cabrillo borrowed some money from one of the crew, Juanes Celain, to purchase provisions, and as security against the loan he gave him a small gold bar, a transaction examined below.34

The master and part-owner of the ship, Blas Gallego, successfully pled his case to the authorities that he had a duty to take his ship with its gold, other merchandise and crew to Seville, and present everything in front of the House of Trade, since the judicial authorities in Tenerife did not have jurisdiction. Reflecting that winter was upon them, and bad weather and seasonal storms could put the ship at risk in the event of further delay, the judges in Tenerife decided to let them leave.

The San Juan reached Cádiz at the beginning of February, and immediately bailiffs came on board and took the prisoners to the public jail. Officials from the House of Trade in Cádiz took over the criminal investigation. All passengers and crew members were detained and not allowed to leave the ship on pain of death and loss of all their property. The judges ordered all passengers to disembark without any of their belongings. Each one was searched before being allowed to leave the ship and ordered to give testimony about the case. The master and pilot of the ship, Blas Gallego, was also taken off to jail.35

Cabrillo had given his first brief deposition in Havana on the 9th of November in which he only stated his name as “Juan Rodríguez” and what he had observed on the ship. In Cádiz on the 12th of February 1532, he, Eugenio de Moscoso, and Juan de Ortega, respectively, were asked to state where they were from, and where they were born, and to answer a detailed list of questions about the circumstances of the missing gold. “Then the Lord judges ordered that there appear before them a man whose name was Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, native (natural) of Palma de Micr Gilio and they received testimony from him by rule of law and they asked him the following questions.”36

A similar list of questions was asked of some of the same witnesses later the
same month by Cabrera, and the answers were compiled in an affidavit that would serve as a record or a perpetual memory of the matter. Once again Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, Eugenio de Moscoso, Diego Sánchez de Santiago, and others, all say where they were born and where they currently resided. Cabrillo was
the first witness: “Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, native of Palma de Micer Gilio said that he can testify ... because he saw what happened ... and this witness also came from Guatemala ... and that is the truth...”

Another detailed list of questions was presented in Cádiz, similar to the one above but not identical. It is dated the 22nd of February and this time Cabrillo’s testimony reads as follows, “Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo native of Palma de Micer Gilio was sworn in according to law, and when asked the first question he replied that he knew all the parties referred to in the question and that he knew about the aforesaid ship because he came in that ship from Veracruz, New Spain to this city [Cádiz]. And that he also knew about the two crates of His Majesty’s gold and that this witness is thirty-five years old....” Cabrillo does not consistently record his age as thirty-five; he elsewhere testifies that he is “around thirty years old”. This lack of precision about one’s own age was not unusual at that time.

The testimony presented in these criminal proceedings is long and complex, and of interest. It is not within the purview of this article to examine all the evidence given in answer to the long lists of questions put to Cabrillo and the other witnesses, some lists are more than thirty questions long. The point of presenting these archival sources is to focus on Cabrillo and his movements, and to present this evidence that contains personal declarations by Cabrillo that he was from the town called Palma de Micer Gilio, whose modern name is Palma del Río, in the province of Cordoba.

Cabrillo’s Arrival and Activities while in Spain

In February 1532, though still involved as a witness in the ongoing and arduous legal investigation in Cádiz, Cabrillo began to engage in his own pressing pursuits during what was intended to be just a short stay back in Spain. The documents show that foremost in his mind was the return of a piece of gold that he had given to Juanes de Celain as security for repayment of a loan that he took out to purchase provisions while the boat was docked in Tenerife. On the 22nd of February, Cabrillo made a formal demand for the return of his gold pledging to repay the loan as agreed. The act was registered as follows:

In the very noble ... city of Cádiz, on this Thursday, February the 22nd of the year ... fifteen thirty-two, before the noble Licentiate Juan Pérez, Lieutenant Judge at the House of Trade of the Indies ... located and found in this city of Cádiz, and in the presence of myself, Alonso de Medina, Public Scribe of the registry of the aforementioned city and scribe to their Majesties, and in the presence of the undersigned
scribes, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo did present himself and say that he was a native of Palma de Micer Gilio, and he did say that he had given and did give a bar of gold weighing nineteen karats, as a pledge to Juanes de Celain, a sailor who came on the ship of Blas Gallego, a resident of Seville, which came from the Indies in New Spain.42

The process was more complicated than anticipated. Celain, who was also a part owner of the ship, was terminally ill and bedridden, staying in a house “near to the fortress” in the city of Cádiz.43 The scribe went to his bedside that same day to inform him of the pending case and Celain testified that he had given the bar of gold and other items to the ship’s master, Blas Gallego, for safekeeping. Meanwhile Gallego, who had been taken prisoner and was being detained in Cádiz for questioning, testified that he had given his own gold and that of Cabrillo as well as other items of value that had been pledged by other passengers and sailors, to another man, Rodrigo Álvarez, who he had instructed to carry it to Seville.

Eventually it transpired that the gold belonging to Cabrillo had been taken to the House of Trade in Seville. Subsequent to these proceedings in Cádiz, Cabrillo requested a sworn, public statement regarding all that had been established so far, so it could stand as “proof and testimony of the truth of the matter,” which was signed by the Lieutenant Judge and the registered Public Scribe in Cádiz.

This series of events generated a wealth of documentary evidence about Cabrillo.44 Left with no other recourse to retrieve the pledged gold, Cabrillo himself then headed to Seville from Cádiz and on Wednesday the 13th of March 1532, he executed a power of attorney. Although the main documentary source for this information from the AGI contains a certified copy of the power of attorney, the original of this document is located in the Archivo Histórico Provincial de Sevilla (hereafter, the AHPS), and thus becomes one of the few examples of Cabrillo’s signature.45 Curiously, in the original housed in the AHPS, the profession of “merchant” shows clearly after his name but it is crossed out in the certified copy, housed in the AGI.

The power of attorney was executed on La Calle de Gradas (The Street of The Steps) near the cathedral in front of the public scribe and other scribes who served as witnesses. In it Cabrillo appointed Alonso Sánchez de Ortega as his legal representative.46 Sánchez de Ortega, a merchant and citizen of Seville from the parish of Santa María (Collación de Santa María), would soon be Cabrillo’s father-in-law. He was also the father of Cabrillo’s business partner in Guatemala, Diego Sánchez de Ortega. This is apparently the first documentary evidence that shows a direct relationship between Cabrillo and his future father-in-law. Understandably, for a transaction as important as this one, Cabrillo needed a person in whom he could place the utmost trust. Although the power of attorney used only the
name “Juan Rodríguez” it is without equivocation Cabrillo because he appoints his future father-in-law as attorney, and the matter for which he entrusts him is the collection of his gold for the return of which presented a deposition in the name of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, native of Palma de Micer Gilio, just a few pages before in the same document.

The power of attorney stated that Alonso Sánchez de Ortega was authorized to pay Cabrillo’s debt on his behalf in return for the bar of gold weighing forty-three gold pesos and that he should retrieve it from either Blas Gallego, the master of the ship that came from New Spain, or from the officials of the House of Trade in Seville. This document also contains additional information, previously unknown, about Cabrillo’s wife Beatriz Sánchez de Ortega’s family and their place of residence and the likely parish in which Juan and Beatriz married—the parish (collación) of Santa María that corresponds today to the parish of El Sagrario, which is the main cathedral in Seville.47

In addition, it appears that Sánchez de Ortega was required by the House of Trade to show proof that Cabrillo had properly registered his gold when he boarded the ship in Veracruz. Thus on March 22, 1532, he presented the following proof of registration.

I, Juan de Heguibar, scribe to the ... Catholic Majesties, and their Notary Public at court ... and officer in charge of the records at the
House of Trade of the Indies ... in Seville; on behalf of the very noble gentleman, Juan Lopez de Recalde, your Majesties Accountant, I hereby declare and swear ... that in the Registry, where the records for lots of gold ... are recorded which were brought from the Indies ... this year of 1532 on the ship called San Juan, whose master is Blas Gallego, the following is written: Registration by Juan Rodríguez, that he has in his possession one thousand and five hundred gold pesos de minas, which he is transporting at his own risk. Signed Juan Rodríguez, 1,500 pesos. In the margin of the entry, the following is written: I, Juan Rodríguez, am carrying this.48

This documentary material, copied in duplicate and triplicate, provides unanticipated factual information about Cabrillo’s wealth at this time. Harry Kelsey wrote in his biography of Cabrillo that with his partner Diego Sánchez de Ortega, their mines and lucrative encomiendas had made them both wealthy men and that Cabrillo received between 500 and 700 pesos de minas a year, which was a huge sum.49 Kelsey noted that it was difficult to know just how rich Cabrillo was but he was rich enough to carry 1,500 pesos in gold to spend in Spain for his marriage and business enterprises with his new father-in-law.50

Shortly after proving that the gold was properly registered, on the 27th of March 1532, the formalities were concluded and Sánchez de Ortega paid the outstanding debt and collected the small gold bar in his future son-in-law’s name. Perhaps Cabrillo himself could not be present at this time because he was giving testimony, again, for the hapless Guatemalan Procurador Cabrera who was appealing a sentence passed by the House of Trade in Seville for items of gold and jewels that they had embargoed, alleging that the Procurador had not properly registered them when he was in Mexico.

It is curious that Cabrillo stated in this testimony that he was “Juan Rodríguez, squire.”51 The purpose of his testimony, however, was to bolster the Procurador’s contention that he was trustworthy and held in great esteem in Guatemala by Pedro de Alvarado and the Cabildo. Perhaps for this reason Juan Rodríguez omitted the “merchant” label he gave himself shortly afterwards in the power of attorney, and the “Cabrillo” surname that he used a week before in Cádiz when he was desperate to get his gold back. As the circumstances had changed, he might have sought to elevate himself somewhat socially, and lend additional credibility as a witness for the Procurador, by highlighting his military status.52

Cabrillo does not mention his birthplace in this testimony but neither does the other witness from Guatemala, Eugenio de Moscoso, so it is likely this was not one of the questions put to them by the scribe. They both state, however, that
they are residents of Santiago de Guatemala, which seems to be the purpose of the proceedings. Cabrillo declared again that he had known Cabrera for over twelve years, as the two men had both served in Cuba, and also that he was a conquistador of Guatemala and that he had been there for more than eight years, which would place him there at the time of the first conquering expedition in 1524, led by Pedro de Alvarado.\textsuperscript{53} In addition Cabrillo stated that he personally saw the ships that were built by Pedro de Alvarado, and that when he left he was “building more.” All of this testimony from Juan Rodríguez “escudero” lined up with known facts about Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, and with what he testified elsewhere.

It is likely that sometime after these depositions, perhaps in the month of April 1532, Cabrillo and Beatríz Sánchez de Ortega were married, which was the main reason Cabrillo was in Seville.\textsuperscript{54} Beginning in early May there is evidence of renewed activity that had a positive outcome for Cabrillo; there were five Royal Decrees addressed to the authorities in Guatemala in which favors and exemptions were granted to a “Juan Rodríguez de Palma,” citizen of Guatemala. Cabrillo, therefore, had another name by which he was identified by the Royal Officials in Spain, “Juan Rodríguez from (de) Palma.” These decrees stated that Rodríguez de Palma was currently in Seville, and had just married, and was returning to Guatemala with his new wife. Two Royal Decrees were issued on the 9th of May 1532; in the first one Cabrillo was granted a license to take back some six pounds of engraved silver or silverware for his personal use.\textsuperscript{55} The second one was an exemption from the customs tax (almojarifazgo) that was normally charged for goods going back and forth to and from the Indies. This particular decree provides more information about his services to the Crown:

Juan Rodríguez de Palma, citizen of Guatemala, you have informed us that you journeyed to those parts more than eighteen years ago [1514] in the armada of Pedrarias de Ávila, our Governor of Tierra Firme, and that afterwards you served in the Island of Cuba, and that then you took part in the discovery and conquest of New Spain, and then you went to populate that province [Guatemala] and that now you have married and you are taking your wife with you to that land with the intention of staying there permanently ... we therefore grant you....\textsuperscript{56}

On the 24th of May another round of Royal Decrees were dispatched by the Crown in Cabrillo’s name. In three separate edicts, Juan Rodríguez de Palma was granted the exemption on the customs tax again, and the information about his military career was repeated there, and he was also given a license to take back to Guatemala two Black slaves, one male and one female.\textsuperscript{57} The third edict
Royal Decree in which it is stated that Juan Rodríguez de Palma, citizen of Guatemala, left [Spain] 18 years ago in the armada of Pedrarias de Ávila to Tierra Firme and then served in Cuba, New Spain, and in Guatemala. Image courtesy of AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, img. 41.
was a concession for a piece of land in Guatemala, in the valley of Tianguecillo.

In addition, among the edicts drawn up on May 24 in Medina del Campo and signed by the Queen, there were three in the name of a “Juana Rodríguez.” According to these three decrees, Juan Rodríguez de Palma intended to take his cousin, “Juana Rodríguez, native of Seville,” back to Guatemala to marry a “Diego Sánchez,” no doubt referring to his brother-in-law. In the decrees granted to Juana Rodríguez, in addition to an exemption from the customs tax, and (as a result of her intention to marry Diego Sánchez) a license to take three pounds of engraved silver for her personal use, the third one stated: “As [we have been informed] that Juan Rodríguez de Palma, your cousin is taking you to that province [Guatemala] so that you will marry Diego Sánchez de Sevilla, you have asked that we grant you a similar piece of land to the one we have indicated for Juan Rodríguez...” This is the first and the last that we hear about cousin Juana Rodríguez. At the time of his death in 1540, Diego Sánchez was not married and had no legitimate offspring, and his encomienda was inherited by his brother-in-law, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.

It is probable that over the next few months Cabrillo was caught up in gathering supplies and preparing for his return to Guatemala. On August 5, 1532, there is a record in the AHPS of another power of attorney, signed by him, in which he named as his representative an Italian merchant, Antonio de Luisi, from Perugia, to convey and transport to New Spain “all the engraved silver and the slaves” that the Crown had granted him, in accordance with the two royal decrees. Power was granted as well to Luisi to collect all monies owed to Cabrillo and to provide a receipt in his name for the return of these items. Cabrillo also gave him authority to settle any of his disputes in front of justices, of all jurisdictions, and as a guarantee he committed his worldly goods in favor of Luisi.

On the same day Cabrillo, registered again as a “merchant,” acknowledged in a letter of recognition that he had an outstanding debt to Antonio de Luisi for a loan of 55,500 maravedis. He promised to pay back the money within one year’s time or else pay double the amount. Juan Rodríguez’s signature can be found at the bottom of this document. These two documents concerning his business affairs with Luisi were signed on the same day, and perhaps the power of attorney served as part of the guarantee of repayment of the loan.

The Guatemalan Procurador needed Cabrillo again, because nine days after he signed the power of attorney for Luisi, on August 14, 1532, he gave another deposition. This document is in the AGI, and once more a Juan Rodríguez, “merchant,” gave testimony in Seville for Cabrera about how they travelled from Guatemala to Veracruz and then by ship to Cádiz.

The record diminishes after this flurry of legal activity in Seville. The next
notice of Cabrillo is in a letter written from Mexico by Jorge de Alvarado to the Cabildo in Guatemala, probably sent in early December 1532. Jorge, a resident of Mexico, was one of the captains who had been appointed at different times by his brother Pedro, to lead campaigns in Guatemala. Jorge reported that a man named Santiago had just arrived on a ship that had capsized near the port of San Juan de Ulúa and had brought news about the event and also about the success of the negotiations of the Procurador Cabrera in front of the Crown, and that the dispatches are being sent, “by way of Panama, with Juan Rodríguez.”

Jorge de Alvarado added that since the matter was of great importance he had hired a messenger to rush the news to Guatemala so that they could take advantage of the “oro al diezmo” before the next smelting of gold at Christmas time. This refers to the concession granted to the citizens of Guatemala of only having to pay one tenth in taxes to the Crown on any future gold that they mined. Shortly afterwards on March 5, 1533, in a letter from Pedro de Alvarado, written in the Puerto de Fonseca where he was getting ready to depart for Peru, Alvarado notified them that Juan Rodríguez had just arrived at that port with the original copy of the Crown's decrees and that he was sending them on to the Cabildo.

Mention of Cabrillo turns up again in the documents two years later. He was in Guatemala in April 1535 providing testimony along with Eugenio de Moscoso and Diego Sánchez de Santiago for the Procurador. As part of the ongoing appeal process, Cabrera had a document drawn up in Guatemala to explain the procedures on board the ships, when one is transporting gold and jewels--no doubt in an attempt to clear his name. One can well understand why Cabrillo and the other witnesses mustered only terse replies to many of this new round of questions, stating, “I have already answered this question in my testimony in Castile, to do with this very same matter.”

Land in the Tianguecillo granted to Juan Rodríguez de Palma

Among the privileges that “Juan Rodríguez de Palma” sought from the Crown and received while he was in Spain, was a specific grant for a league of land in the valley of Tianguecillo. This grant was dated the 24th of May 1532. While of general interest for studies of Spanish landholding patterns in Guatemala during the early colonial period, its particular significance for present purposes is that it furnishes further evidence that Juan Rodríguez de Palma and Juan Rodríguez (and therefore Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo) were one and the same person.

While in Spain, Cabrillo requested the land as a reward and in repayment for his services, both for him and for his heirs. In the royal decree it states that the league should begin near to the first stream after the bridge on the right hand
side going towards a pine forest, and that it be measured in a square, beginning from the stream going forward, so that he could bring his livestock there, clear
the land, plant crops and have a vineyard and other trees. The same day his cousin, Juana Rodríguez, asked for a similar grant of land.69 And four months later, Eugenio de Moscoso, fellow shipmate and resident (vecino) of Santiago, requested a league of land in the same valley, specifying that it should be next to “the one that Juan Rodríguez had asked for” and that he also wished to plant trees and have a vineyard, and that his children could inherit it after his death.70

The Tianguecillo, which means small market in Nahuatl, was near the town of Chimaltenango and early on it was recognized as a desirable area for farming with rivers and natural springs nearby, open plains for raising livestock, and an abundance of maize.71 In 1527, the Cabildo members deliberated at length over that site and the valley of Almolonga when they were choosing a place to found their city.72 What was also appealing about the Tianguecillo for some of the members was its location in an open area, with better access to the Indigenous villages and provinces where many of them held towns in encomienda or hoped to in the near future.73 Although they ended up founding Santiago elsewhere, the city considered the fertile valley of the Tianguecillo part of their communal land. Nonetheless, Spanish citizens continued to seek rights to use the lands for their livestock and as agricultural land.

In the second Libro de Cabildo there are several references to the Tianguecillo. For example, a temporary license, but not ownership, was given to Baltasar de Mendoza in January 1532, to place his herd of sheep in “the Tianguecillo near to Chimaltenango, by the source of the natural spring, as long as this did not violate the rights of the natives nor of any other person.”74 The exact conditions regarding the use of these uncultivated lands, however, became a matter of escalating dispute because in September 1535, the Governor and the Cabildo members stated:

These lands on the plains of Tianguecillo had been set aside some time ago by the city as public lands for grazing their livestock but notwithstanding this some people had bought the lands, alleging that they had belonged to the natives before the war, and taking both possession and ownership of them, something which they cannot do, because the natives lost those lands because of warfare and rebellion. Henceforth, they decreed anew that these uncultivated lands that stretch from the Tianguecillo to this city some five leagues around it and in all directions should belong to the city. And they ordered that no natives should occupy these lands nor should any person buy them from the natives, on pain of losing the moneys paid to purchase them.75

Although the documents do not include when Cabrillo got back to Santiago
de Guatemala to establish his household with his new wife Beatríz, it was likely around the middle of 1533 and that he presented his land grant to the Cabildo not long afterwards.\textsuperscript{76} There is ample evidence, however, that Cabrillo was not, in fact, given land in the Tianguecillo but rather in the Panchoy Valley.\textsuperscript{77} It is possible that, despite the royal concession, the land in the Tianguecillo was not ceded to him due to the city’s claim that it was their communal lands or perhaps because Cabrillo changed his mind about the desirability of that parcel of land.

It turned out that Cabrillo’s tenure of the land in Panchoy was also not straightforward as it came under scrutiny after the destruction of Santiago de Guatemala by flooding and mudslide in September 1541, when it was decided to designate Panchoy as the site of the new city. Once again, because of dire and unusual circumstances, Cabrillo’s affairs became complicated and a paper trail of documents was generated, serving well the purposes of both confirming his identity and tracing the history of this land grant, which stayed in his family long after his death.

In his seminal study of the city of Santiago de Guatemala, historian Christopher Lutz noted that there was discussion in October 1541 about moving the recently devastated city to either the Tianguecillo or to the nearby Panchoy Valley. Panchoy was closer to where prominent residents had their wheat farms and cattle ranches, and the desire for continuity and less disruption was no doubt a determining factor. The Crown officials, meanwhile, wrote that the Bishop was behind the movement to have the city moved to the less desirable site of the Tianguecillo, in order to be near to encomienda towns held by him and a close relative.\textsuperscript{78}

The third Libro de Cabildo recorded two acts in 1542 and one in 1543 regarding Cabrillo’s league of land in the Tianguecillo, which was granted in Spain to “Juan Rodríguez de Palma.”\textsuperscript{79} It is important to note that he is only referred to in the three Cabildo books that cover the years from 1524-1553 as “Juan Rodríguez.” Nevertheless, as all the documentation here has to do with the league of land in the Tianguecillo, and references specifically the royal provision of May 1532 granted as a result of Cabrillo’s efforts in Spain, and also includes mention of his wife Beatríz, there is little doubt whose land grant is under discussion.

On June 12, 1542, it was noted in Cabildo that Cabrillo and his wife had a league of land in the Panchoy, and that because the city was now being moved there, this land and land held by other residents was greatly needed and had to be taken for the new city.\textsuperscript{80} It was also stated that since this land grant in Panchoy was given to Cabrillo by the governor of the province, by virtue of a decree from the Crown, that in respect for this decree, his wife should take the league of land in the Tianguecillo (as specified in the aforesaid decree), and surrender the one they had in the Panchoy Valley. Beatríz was informed that if she was not in
Royal Decree dated October 11, 1546 in which the Crown repeats that the grant for Juan Rodríguez de Palma, first given in May 24, 1532, is to be for one league of land in the Tianguecillo, Image courtesy of AGCA, A1.2.4. Exp. 1574, leg. 2195, fol. 342. Photograph courtesy of Héctor Concohá Chet.
agreement with the exchange of land she would be given 300 pesos and nothing else, and that she must surrender the land. Eleven days later, Cabrillo’s wife was notified that the said league of land would be measured and given to her.

Despite the specific directives of 1542 with regard to the land, a year later in June 1543, and after the news of the death of Cabrillo had reached the city, the Cabildo records show that they were still notifying his wife to leave the land in Panchoy. The authorities were instructed to notify “Beatríz de Ortega” that she would be given the league in the Tianguecillo, and that it would be measured by trustworthy people within the next ten days. The moving of the city had given rise to conflicts over land ownership among the Spaniards, and it appears that residents like Beatríz were not giving up without a struggle.

As a result of the documentation that surfaced in the AGI and in the Cabildo books about the Cabrillo family’s disputed land grant, it occurred to me that there might be additional records in the Guatemalan archive. My search this time, however, would not be for Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, for whom I had already looked in the 1980s (as had Harry Kelsey), but instead for Juan Rodríguez de Palma. It is possible that no one searching for Cabrillo had ever made that connection, and perhaps it is not a surprise that in the Archivo General de Centro América (hereafter AGCA), in the old card catalogue, there is record of three documents under the name of Juan Rodríguez de Palma, all concerning the league of land in the Tianguecillo.
Of particular interest is an original Royal Decree that was dispatched to Guatemala from Spain in October 1546, and is presently preserved in a bound book in the AGCA with other early royal provisions. This decree ordered that the original decree of May 24, 1532, be respected and that the Cabrillo family be given the land as ordered, but in the Tianguecillo and not elsewhere. It also stated that the land close to the new city (in Panchoy) must be relinquished, and that it had been granted “against the tenor of the aforementioned decree” and in detriment to the new city. Again, the person in question in the new decree is “Juan Rodríguez de Palma.”

This name occurs only in documentation emanating from the Crown and was not used by Cabrillo personally during his lifetime or by officials writing up documents in Guatemala, and certainly not by his family after his death. Numerous disputes took place after his death over rights to encomiendas, battles that were fought by his widow and his children, and the name used most often by them was Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo. According to the originals (and copies) of the 1532 and the 1546 Royal Decrees for the league of land in the Tianguecillo, in which Cabrillo is called Juan Rodríguez de Palma, there is little doubt that Beatríz (and their sons) knew about this name that was derived from a place name, and was used in those important decrees. Beatríz, a native of Seville would have known that the “de Palma” referred to the town of Palma de Micer Gilio, modern-day Palma del Río in Cordoba, Spain.

The documents presented here concerning the controversy over this land grant show that Juan Rodríguez “from Palma” is the same person as the Juan Rodríguez registered in the Guatemalan Cabildo books, granted the same league of land in the Tianguecillo and married to the same woman. It is of interest that documentation about this land grant was found in archives so far afield—in Seville, New York City, and in Guatemala City. It is unusual to be able to trace events and people from the sixteenth century so seamlessly among disparate unpublished manuscript sources located in archives in three countries.

Conclusion

Documentary sources uncovered in the last twelve months establish that when Cabrillo was away from Guatemala between 1531-1533, he gave sworn testimony on numerous occasions, and appeared before Crown authorities to ask for rewards, and that in most instances he was identified as either Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, native of Palma de Micer Gilio or as simply Juan Rodríguez de Palma. There is abundant evidence to confirm that Cabrillo was a native son of the city of Palma del Río. It is my hope that I have provided a convincing answer to what
Harry Kelsey called the most intriguing question about Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo: Where was he born? 

The earliest documented usage of his surname Cabrillo is February 1532, while in Cádiz. Prior to this time, and throughout the rest of his life, in documentation drawn up in Guatemala, he was known predominantly as Juan Rodríguez, a common name both in Spain and in Portugal. Without the additional information that he was also known as “de Palma” it was challenging to locate him in the archives, and as a result documentation in the AGCA and in the AGI was overlooked. No one had previously made the connection that Juan Rodríguez de Palma was another name for Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.

The particular context of the depositions, in which Cabrillo stated his full name and where he was born, is his personal testimony, under oath in front of Spanish officials, after a fraught series of events whose first act in Havana culminated in the brutal and prolonged torture of crew members from the San Juan, suspected of stealing gold. Shortly afterwards in Cádiz, in a determined effort to get his own gold back from the authorities at the House of Trade, Cabrillo once again stated his full name and said he was from Palma de Micer Gilio; these were not moments for invention and glossing over the truth. Rather, it is persuasive that Cabrillo provided this additional information because he was forced by the circumstances and had no other choice.

Other arresting details about Cabrillo’s life have emerged from these sources. Cabrillo first left Spain in 1514 in the armada of Pedrarias de Ávila (Pedro Arias de Ávila) and he only returned to Spain once, after eighteen years, and that was the eventful voyage outlined above. He carried with him to Spain over 1,500 pesos de oro, a large amount of gold to have accumulated, no doubt some of it belonging to his brother-in-law. The reasons for enduring the harrowing journey by sea was to marry Beatríz Sánchez de Ortega and to bring back to Guatemala his cousin Juana to marry his brother-in-law, and no doubt establish business ties with Alonso Sánchez de Ortega. Juana Rodríguez disappeared from the records after 1532, but the documents brought her to attention briefly, and confirmed that Cabrillo had close family ties in Seville. Beatríz and her father have been identified as from the parish of Santa María in Seville, and these details will help inform later research on the Sánchez de Ortega family.

Cabrillo formed a relationship in Seville with an Italian merchant from Perugia, borrowing sums of money from him and giving him power of attorney to oversee the return of some of Cabrillo’s household goods to Guatemala via Mexico, while Cabrillo himself purposefully travelled back to Guatemala via Panama. Probably his intention was to meet first with the Governor of Guatemala, Pedro de Alvarado, as he did in the Puerto de Fonseca. Cabrillo testified that Alvarado
was building ships the last time he saw him before his departure for Spain, and after Cabrillo’s return he too was occupied in building ships for many years.

Cabrillo also petitioned for a plot of land in the Tianguecillo while in Spain, and as late as 1546, his heirs were still averse to claiming it, preferring instead the alternative land they had managed to obtain in the Panchoy Valley. It is not clear if Beatriz and sons ever took up the league of land that Cabrillo was originally granted, but there was certainly ongoing controversy about their agricultural land for a long time. This dispute ran parallel with the heated quarrel over Cabrillo’s encomienda towns.

I hope this article has advanced the conversation about Cabrillo and reinvigorated interest in future archival research on him and his family. Historians and researchers in Seville, California, and Palma del Rio have all pondered the mystery of the “Cabrillo” part of his name. While Rodíguez was a common surname in Palma in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, no one was named Cabrillo. Recent searches in the archives for the surname Cabrillo from that period have turned up no information.

One historian, Dr. Emilio J. Navarro, shared with me some digital copies of the history journal *Ariadna*, which is published in Palma. In one of the journal
articles the word “cabrillo” appears in a document dated August 7, 1515. This article was about the proceedings of the meetings of a charitable society called the Hospital of San Sebastián in Palma del Río, and was written and transcribed by the paleographer and historian from the University of Seville, Pilar Ostos Salcedo. The transcription (and my translation) of the names of the witnesses present at that meeting reads: “Bartolomé de Zamora, farmer, and Diego Rodríguez, barber, and Alfonso Gómez, cabrillo.” In other words, the three witnesses stated their occupations after their names and one of them was a “cabrillo.” This document is housed in the Archivo Histórico de Palma del Río.

This was the first time I had come across the word “cabrillo” in the sixteenth century that was not in the context of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo or members of his immediate family. In discussion with Dr. Ostos and Dr. Navarro, both said they had no other record of this word and had no idea what the word meant, then or now. The consensus, however, was that given the manner in which it was used, this was probably an occupation and not a surname. I have concluded that Cabrillo did not invent a word as his surname, but rather employed a known word that a contemporary of his from his hometown used in 1515 as the name of his occupation. As a final comment: whenever in his testimony Juan Rodríguez used the word “cabrillo” after his name, he also immediately followed it with “native (natural)” of Palma de Micer Gilio.” Perhaps he was saying he was a “cabrillo” from Palma de Micer Gilio—an occupation with which he was associated in his place of birth and later started using it as a surname to distinguish himself from others with the common name of Juan Rodríguez. Cabrillo showed great skill and ambition during his long military career in the Indies. Was his ability to shift his identity and occupation part of his ingenuity and resourcefulness and proof of his powers of adaptation? Readers may draw their own conclusions.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the following people for research assistance, Mayda Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Esther González Pérez, Héctor Concohá Chet and Christopher Lutz, as well as Lisa Maldonado for providing translations for the significant historical documents and Mosa McNeilly for editing assistance.

2. “Micer Gilio” is a Spanish corruption of the Italian name “Micer Egidio.” In 1342, King Alfonso XI granted power and dominion over the town of Palma to his Genoese admiral, Egidio Bocanegra, and the “villa de Palma” passed to the noble system and stayed in the Bocanegra-Portocarrero family for many centuries. Manuel Muñoz Rojo, Historia y Devoción de un Pueblo: Palma del Río y la Virgen de Belén (Palma del Río: Hermandad de Nuestra Señora de Belén de Palma del Río, 2007), 71.

3. See the three articles by Peter Rowe: “Cabrillo discovery rocking the boat,” The San Diego Union-Tribune, June 20, 2016, A1, A7; “Cabrillo mystery may be solved,” Los Angeles Times, September
I initially went to Seville to carry out archival research for a long-term project on sixteenth century Guatemala, in collaboration with my colleagues historian Christopher H. Lutz and geographer W. George Lovell.

5. For a discussion and critical reevaluation of the role of Pedro de Alvarado in the early conquest and settlement of Guatemala see, W. George Lovell, Christopher H. Lutz and Wendy Kramer, Atemorizar la Tierra: Pedro de Alvarado y la Conquista de Guatemala, 1520-1541, (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2016). In addition, an analysis of these events can be found in Lovell and Lutz with Kramer and William Swezey, “Strange Lands and Different Peoples”: Spaniards and Indians in Colonial Guatemala, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).


8. The Crown was entitled to the “royal fifth” which meant that 20% of all metals mined in the Indies had to be shipped to them.

9. The actual port was located in San Juan de Ulúa, which was a small barren island facing Veracruz, and served as the port of entry for New Spain. Goods were carried to Veracruz on the mainland by barge and small boats. For a thorough discussion of the two separate towns in the sixteenth century see Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína, trans. Carla Rahn Phillips, Spain’s Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 11-12. To simplify the distinction between these two places, and in accordance with how it is often referred to in the sources, I have used the shorthand of “Veracruz” as the name of the port of embarkation.

10. My response to inadvertently finding this information, “Oh my God. Look who was on the boat!” was first cited by the journalist, Peter Rowe. See “Cabrillo discovery rocking the boat,” The San Diego Union-Tribune, June 20, 2016, A1, A7.

11. The topic of my Ph.D. dissertation, which was published in book form in 1994, was the distribution of tribute, services and encomiendas to the conquistadores of Guatemala, from 1524-1544. Wendy Kramer, Encomienda Politics in Early Colonial Guatemala, 1524-1544: Dividing the Spoils (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). On page 1, I define the encomienda as an “institution designed to channel Indian labor and produce into Spanish hands after the conquest of an area.” And I cite Charles Gibson who described the encomienda as “a formal grant of designated Indian families, usually the inhabitants of a town or of a cluster of towns, entrusted to the charge of a Spanish colonist, who thus became the encomendero.” Citing Lockhart I also wrote...
that an “encomienda grant did not confer the right to own land, but went beyond the right to collect tributes, entitling the encomendero to deploy the Indians in mines or agricultural enterprises.” See my sources for this information: Charles Gibson, Spain in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 49 and James Lockhart, Spanish Peru, 1532-1560: A Colonial Society (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 11.

12. Although I use the shortened name “Cabrillo” in this present study, it is not the most accurate. Cabrillo and the authorities did not use it with regularity until after his death. I am employing it here as it is the most common name used for him in modern-day history books.

13. See Kelsey’s comprehensive examination of the controversy over Cabrillo’s Portuguese origin and the many attempts by several historians to get to the truth: Harry Kelsey, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo (San Marino California: Huntington Library, 1986), 4-8, 178-179.


15. Manuel María de Peralta, Costa-Rica, Nicaragua y Panamá en el siglo XVI; su historia y sus límites según los documentos del Archivo de Indias de Sevilla, del de Simancas, etc. (Madrid: M. Murillo, 1883): 618, fn1. Kelsey notes that there is as yet no proof that Cabrillo actually discovered and named Cape Mendocino; see Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, 173.


17. As noted by Murdo MacLeod, the small groups of conquistadors were all well acquainted with each other, which made it quite difficult to obscure or revise their Old World origins and the enjoyment of “turning up malicious gossip” about their comrades in arms kept these relaciones “reasonably honest.” See Murdo J. MacLeod, “Self-promotion: The Relaciones de Méritos y Servicios and their Historical and Political Interpretation,” Colonial Latin American Historical Review, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1998), 28-29.

18. Other notable Portuguese in Guatemala were Doctor Blas Cota from the island of Terceira in the Azores and Gómez de Alvarado, the illegitimate son of Pedro de Alvarado. See José María Vallejo García-Hevia, Juicio a un conquistador, Pedro de Alvarado: su proceso de residencia en Guatemala (1536 - 1538), (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2008), 164, 224-225, 675. AGI, Audiencia de Guatemala, 52, Probanza de méritos y servicios del Doctor Blas Cota, 1549. Cota was a government official in the Azores and Pedro de Alvarado convinced him to come to Guatemala with his wife and children, promising him a position as his lieutenant (1538-1539). Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María and María del Carmen Deola de Girón, Libro Viejo de la fundación de Guatemala (Guatemala: Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, 1991), 45, 53.

19. AGI, Indiferente General, 1801, Relación de la hacienda que tiene su majestad en la provincia de Guatemala con una relación de los bienes de difuntos, 1535.

20. Diego Sánchez de Ortega was granted license to pan for gold, presumably with his partner Cabrillo. See, Sáenz de Santa María and Deola de Girón, Libro Viejo, 137.

21. Writing about Cabrillo’s time in Spain, Kelsey, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, 55 states: “Details do not exist, but we can imagine that Juan Rodríguez stayed in Spain for as long as a year, courting Beatriz Sánchez, visiting the scenes of his youth, and purchasing supplies to take back to his estates in Guatemala.”

22. In testimony dated in August 1532, Cabrillo says ten months prior was when he first met crew on the ship, thus placing the time of departure of the San Juan sometime in October or early November, 1531: see AGI, Justicia, 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, 29 February, 1532, digital image (hereafter img.) 854 is where Cabrillo’s testimony begins and on img. 503 he testifies that the only ship ready to depart for Spain when they got to the port was Blas Gallego’s.
23. I have identified so far at least six documents in the *Justicia* section of the AGI, comprising in total more than 1,350 pages that are concerned with this voyage of the *San Juan* in 1531-32.

24. The last Cabildo session prior to Gabriel de Cabrera’s departure was in August 1531: see LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 21v. Meanwhile, records from a Guatemalan account book show that on the 22nd of August 1531, the Procurador Cabrera was given approximately 5,002 pesos to take to Spain: see AGI, Indiferente General 1801, Relación de la hacienda que tiene su majestad.

25. The sources will be cited below when we look at his testimony in more detail. See note 52.

26. This Diego Sánchez de Santiago should not be confused with Cabrillo’s brother-in-law Diego Sánchez de Ortega sometimes called Diego Sánchez de Sevilla. There were three men called Diego Sánchez in Guatemala at the same time. The third one was Diego Sánchez de Talavera. See Sáenz de Santa María and Deola de Girón, *Libro Viejo*, 51, 137, 141, 188, 196.

27. Eugenio de Moscoso was both a regidor (city councilman), and treasurer in Guatemala prior to 1532. While in Spain he was also granted favors by the Crown and arranged to take his sister and niece back to Guatemala with him, see AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 41v-42, Exención de almojarifazgo a Eugenio Moscoso, 20 July, 1532. He was also named first alcaide (warden) of the fortress, see AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 36v-37, Real Provisión a Eugenio Moscoso, nombrándolo alcaide de la fortaleza que se ha mandado hacer para defensa de Santiago de Guatemala, 15 July, 1532.


29. Ibid., imgs. 145, 157. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación presentan información y pesquisura sobre el robo de mas de mil pesos que faltaron de unos cajones que conducía para Su Majestad Gabriel de Cabrera, que le habían entregado en Guatemala los oficiales reales, 26 January 1532, img. 94.

30. Another witness from Guatemala, Diego Sánchez de Santiago, testified that he personally did not let anyone else take charge of his own possessions on board the ship, unlike Cabrera. He added that the Procurador had left his gold and jewels in a chest, with no other safeguards, “near to the head of this witnesses’ bed.” AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 145, 157. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, img. 234.

31. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, img. 15.

32. According to the witnesses, most of the crew considered Ochoa to be a thief. See AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, img. 159.

33. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, imgs. 7-12.

34. AGI, Justicia, 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, imgs. 7-12. AGI, Justicia 707, N.6, Testimonio de los autos seguidos en la audiencia de la Contratación a petición de Juan de Ortega, 18 de marzo, 1532, img. 24.

35. AGI, Justicia, 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, img. 71.

36. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, imgs. 18, 92-97. This exact testimony is repeated in AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 365-369.

37. The term used for this type of document was from the Latin, *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*.

38. AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, img. 141. The testimony begins on the page corresponding to image 141.


40. Kelsey also wrote that Cabrillo did not know his exact age: see *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 12.
41. AGI, Justicia 707, N.6, Testimonio de los autos seguidos, img. 24. The amount is described as
a gold bar weighing 43 pesos and some grains and of nineteen karats. The amount Cabrillo
borrowed from Celain was twenty-five ducats and sixty maravedis.

42. Ibid. One of the passengers in his testimony noted that Juanes Celain was called the master
of the ship but that “he didn't do anything” and the person who gave the orders was Blas
Gallego; see AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, img. 157.

43. A witness testified that Juanes de Celain died from extreme drowsiness or torpor (modorra).
See AGI, Justicia, 1152, N.1, R.1, Pleito fiscal con Blas Gallego y Rodrigo Alvarez, sobre el oro
que trajeron de Indias por registrar, 26 March, 1533, img. 72.

44. This article is part of a larger monograph that I am presently working on that will include
transcriptions and translations of documents, as well as additional facsimile pages of the
original documents. Publication date will be in 2017 in association with the office of the Mayor
of Palma del Río, José Antonio Ruiz Almenara.

45. Thanks go to Nancy and Robert Munson for contributing to costs related to research,
reproduction and copyright of these documents from the AHPS. Researcher Esther González
Pérez located three signed documents among the books of the notaries Luis Enero and Alonso
de la Barrera. AHPS, Sección Protocolos Notariales. Signatura: 6685-P. Poder de Juan Rodríguez,
residente en Guatemala a Alonso Sánchez Ortega. Sevilla, 13, marzo, 1532; Signatura: 42-P.
Juan Rodríguez, mercader, vecino de la ciudad de Santiago en la provincia de Guatemala,
otorga poder a Antonio de Luisi, 5, agosto, 1532; Signatura: 42-P. Juan Rodríguez, mercader,
vecino de la ciudad de Santiago en la provincia de Guatemala, reconoce que debe pagar ciertas
cantidades a Antonio de Luisi, 5, agosto, 1532.

46. It appears that the scribes preferred to set up shop close to the places with much economic
and commercial activity, one of them being la calle Gradas near to the Cathedral. This practice
probably dated back to the fourteenth century. See Pilar Ostos and María Luisa Pardo,
Documentos y notarios de Sevilla en el siglo XIV (1301-1350), (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla,
2003), 21-22.

47. Personal communication with Esther González Pérez on August 4, 2016.

48. AGI, Justicia 707, N.6, Testimonio de los autos seguidos. This issue of proper registration of
gold and items of value was something that further complicated the Procurador’s situation
while in Spain. AGI, Justicia 822, N.3, R.1, Pleito Fiscal: Gabriel de Cabrera.

49. Kelsey notes when discussing Cabrillo’s income from his encomiendas and mines that he
was made rich from these enterprises “but just how rich we do not know.” See Juan Rodríguez
Cabrillo, 51, 54 59-60; see also pages 50-51 and 54 in Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo for a discussion
of rich gold placers near Cabrillo’s encomienda in Cobán. See also my discussion of the
encomienda of Cobán in, Kramer, Encomienda Politics, 76, 132, 143, 155-156.

50. In comparison, Procurador Cabrera declared that he was carrying with him 2,600 pesos de
oro of his own money. The total amount that the Procurador carried to deliver to the Crown
was 5,000 pesos de oro. AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs.
309, 500. AGI, Justicia, 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, img. 7.
One of the Crown officials in Guatemala, the Accountant Zurrilla, also noted that some 5,000
pesos had just been sent to the Crown; see AGI, Guatemala 45, Carta del contador Zurrilla,
15 September, 1531.

51. Cabrillo gave testimony on the 1st of March 1532, or shortly after, while in Seville. AGI, Justicia
822, N.3, R.1, Pleito Fiscal: Gabriel de Cabrera, imgms. 13-16.

52. Though literally the term escudero refers to the person who carried his master’s shield, there
are several definitions of the term. See Roque Barcia, Primer diccionario general etimológico de la
lengua española, 5 vols. (Madrid: Álvarez Hermanos, 1881), 2, p. 496. A rough translation of the
Spanish is: “He who in older times used to receive a donation or a salary or simply depended
financially on a Lord or a person of distinction, and so was obliged to serve him and assist him at times and on occasions as required.” The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (accessed August 12, 2016 on http://www.rae.ed), for example, gives this more distinguished definition of the title escudero: a rough translation again: “a man who through his blood or kinship belongs to a certain stratum of the nobility.” However, judging by a reference to escuderos in the second *Libro de Cabildo*, and it is remarkable that Juan Rodríguez was actually a witness to this act, it would seem that the escuderos were men named to be responsible for military obligations for underage boys, whose fathers were absent. See LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fols. 203v-204v, Cabildo entry dated 29 August, 1541.

53. Juan Rodríguez registered as a citizen (vecino) of Santiago on three different occasions, in 1524, 1527 and 1528. See Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 49, citing the *Libro Viejo*.

54. Searches by myself and Esther González Pérez in Seville have so far found no trace of a marriage record for Cabrillo and Beatriz.

55. AGI Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 13v-14, Licencia a Juan Rodríguez de Palma de llevar a Guatemala doce marcos de plata labrada, May 9, 1532. A marco was a measurement for silver and gold; for silver one marco was 8 onces, half a pound. Spain’s commercial ambitions were such that items of silver and gold were supposed to travel in one direction only, and that was toward Spain, therefore in 1519 it was prohibited to take to the Indies these items without special license. See Margarita García-Mauriño Mundi, *La pugna entre el Consulado de Cádiz y los jenízaros por las exportaciones a Indias* (1720-1765) (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1999), 119.

56. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 14-14v, Exención de almojarifazgo a Juan Rodríguez de Palma, May 9, 1532. So far I have not found any information on Juan Rodríguez under either name “de Palma” or “Cabrillo” as part of Pedrarias’ armada to Tierra Firme. It is possible that he was part of a group that left Panama very early on and went to Cuba: personal communication with Carmen Mena García, Seville, April 2016. Her ground-breaking and exceptional research on Pedrarias and Panama are essential reading for an understanding of Spanish conquest and settlement of this region. See: María del Carmen Mena García, *La sociedad de Panamá en el siglo XVI* (Sevilla: Excma. Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1984); *Sevilla y las flotas de Indias: la gran armada de Castilla del Oro* (1513-1514) (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1988); *Un linaje de conversos en tierras americanas: los testamentos de Pedrarias Dávila, gobernador de Castilla del Oro y Nicaragua* (León: Universidad de León, 2004); and *El oro del Darién: entradas y cabalgadas en la conquista de Tierra Firme* (1509-1525) (Sevilla: Centro de Estudios Andaluces, 2011).

57. Eugenio Moscoso also sought license to take back two Black male slaves and one White female slave: AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 49-50. Robinson Herrera discusses the acquisition and trade in African slaves in sixteenth century Guatemala. He notes that the purchase while in Spain of one or two slaves was not uncommon and that a royal license was needed to import them. These grants specified the use of slaves as household servants and not for resale; though he notes that this admonition “likely went unheeded.” Robinson A. Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Sixteenth-Century Santiago de Guatemala* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 112-113. See page 116 where he mentions Juan Rodríguez Palma’s permission to purchase one male and one female slave.

58. Cabrillo’s brother-in-law is named Diego Sánchez de Sevilla in these documents. Thus in the same way that the Crown officials identified Juan Rodríguez as “Juan Rodríguez de Palma”, so have they identified Diego Sánchez as being “from Seville”.

59. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 17v-18, Concesión de tierras a Juana Rodríguez, May 24, 1532.

60. The date of the encomienda grant to Cabrillo was March 31, 1540. Justicia 290, El fiscal con Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo sobre el pueblo de Cobán, 1563, fols. 1, 4. According to the laws regarding succession of encomiendas, the grant would have gone to a surviving wife or any legitimate children.
Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo

61. AHPS. Sección Protocolos Notariales. Signatura: 42-P. Juan Rodríguez, mercader, vecino de la ciudad de Santiago en la provincia de Guatemala, otorga poder a Antonio de Luisi, 5, agosto, 1532.

62. AHPS. Sección Protocolos Notariales. Signatura: 42-P. Juan Rodríguez, mercader, vecino de la ciudad de Santiago en la provincia de Guatemala, reconoce que debe pagar ciertas cantidades a Antonio de Luisi, 5, agosto, 1532.


64. Jorge's role in the conquest of Guatemala has often been overlooked. For a discussion of the important role that he played in conquest and in the distribution of encomiendas see Kramer, *Encomienda Politics*, 63-84.

65. The reference to a “Santiago” most likely refers to Diego Sánchez de Santiago. The letter from Jorge has no date but it is likely sometime after November 29, 1532, when the news got to Mexico and before the 3rd of January 1533, when the copies of the decrees were presented in Cabildo. Jorge’s letter can be found in, Rafael de Arévalo, ed. *Colección de documentos antiguos del Archivo del Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Imprenta de Luna, 1857), 191-192. One of the reasons Cabrera as Procurador had been sent to Spain was precisely to negotiate a reduction in the tax on gold, see LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 42.

66. The letter has no year on it but must have been written in 1533. A facsimile of this letter was published in the *Libro Viejo* but the editor incorrectly transcribed the day of the month as the 23rd and not the 24th of March. This error was repeated by Kelsey, with him incorrectly adding the year as 1534. Pedro de Alvarado was not in Puerto de Fonseca at this time, having moved on to Puerto Viejo, Ecuador by March 1534. See José Antonio Villacorta, *Libro Viejo de la fundación de Guatemala, y papeles relativos a don Pedro de Alvarado* (Guatemala, C.A.: Tipografía Nacional, 1934), 289 and Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 60, 201 fn.80. Alvarado wrote another letter dated the 10th of March 1534, in Puerto Viejo to the Governor of Panama: see AGI, Guatemala, 39, R.4, N.9, Carta de Pedro de Alvarado, gobernador de Honduras, March 10, 1534.


68. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 15v-16, Concesión de terreno a Juan Rodríguez de Palma, May 24, 1532.

69. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 17v-18, Concesión de tierras a Juana Rodríguez, May 24, 1532.

70. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 56-57, Concesión de tierra a Eugenio de Moscoso, September 9, 1532.


72. Rafael de Arévalo, ed., *Libro de actas del ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Santiago de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1932), 35.

73. Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 48, notes that somewhat prophetically Hernando de Alvarado preferred the site of the Tiaguicillo for the new city in 1527, instead of the area of Almolonga because of the latter’s proximity to “volcanoes and sandstone, where the earth trembles greatly.”

74. LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 28v, on 26 January, 1532. Mendoza was a member of the town council at this time, serving as regidor.

75. LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 84v.

76. See Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 56-57 who also wrote that Juan and Beatriz would have been setting up their house in Santiago in the summer of 1533.
The Panchoy region is called “Pancan” here.


LC3, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fols. 28, 32, 63, on 12 and 23 June, 1542, and on 17 June, 1543.

Cabrillo's land was also needed for *milpas* (cornfields). LC3, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 28, on 12 June, 1542.

LC3, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 32, on 23 June, 1542.

Spanish naming practices in the sixteenth century were not consistent. Beatríz de Ortega was the same person as Beatriz Sánchez de Ortega.

I would like to thank Guatemalan historian Héctor Concoha Chet for locating these documents for me in the AGCA.

The card catalogue (*fichero*) in the AGCA is known to have been painstakingly developed and shaped by the dedicated archivist and Director of the Guatemalan archive, José Joaquín Pardo, who passed away in 1964.

AGCA, A1.2.4, Expediente 15749, legajo 2195, fol. 342, Su majestad declara nulo el reparto de tierras hecho en la persona de Juan Rodríguez Palma, tierras situadas en el Tiangues de Chimaltenango, por ser ejidos de la ciudad de Santiago, 11 October, 1546. There is a copy of this document in a Registry of the Royal Decrees in the AGI; see AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.3, fol. 29, Sobre concesión de tierra a Juan Rodríguez de Palma, October 4, 1546. The other documents to do with Rodríguez de Palma in the AGCA are certified copies of this 1546 decree, probably presented in later disputes concerning this piece of land. This is a topic for future study.

The documents detailing the many disputes over Cabrillo's encomienda towns are discussed in Kesley, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*.

The town of Palma de Micer Gilio was often referred to as just “Palma” or “la villa de Palma” in the documentation of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Palma del Río is close to Seville and references to “Palma” in Seville would at that time have meant this town and not the town Palma del Condado in Huelva nor the neighborhood of Seville with that same name; from personal correspondence in Palma del Río with the official chronicler of that city, Manuel Muñoz Rojo, April 14, 2016.

Kelsey begins his 1986 book with the statement that he has not given a fully conclusive answer to that intriguing question, where was Cabrillo born? See, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, first page of the Foreword.

Pilar Ostos Salcedo, “Documentos del Hospital de San Sebastián de Palma del Río (1509-1519),” *Ariadna, Revista de Investigación*, No. 12 (Dic. 1993), 87-88. Ostos notes that these documents concern economic and legal affairs and are the contracts between the hospital and citizens of Palma del Río and of Peñaflor, and with the administration of the hospital's properties.

“Bartolomé de Çamora, labrador, e Diego Rodríguez, barbero, e Alfonso Gómez, cabrillo, vezynos desta dicha villa.” Professor Ostos added the capital letters, punctuation and accents, as sixteenth century script had no strict rules of grammar.

I am indebted to the Director of the Palma del Río Archive, Antonio León Lillo, for allowing me to consult the original document and for providing me with a scanned copy. The citation is A.M.P.R., H.S.S., leg. 44, doc.n.12, dated October 14, 1515.
David Lion Gardiner:
A Yankee in Gold Rush California, 1849-1851

By Molly McClain

In the 1840s, San Diego consisted of a few dozen small adobe houses in the area now known as Old Town. Ships anchored at the southwest end of Point Loma where large board houses had once housed great piles of cattle hides. The economic vitality of the region had largely disappeared by the time that Richard Henry Dana published his bestselling book, *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), with its lively descriptions of the Mexican pueblo. Fewer than 150 people lived in San Diego by the middle of the decade, as many of the wealthy Californio ranching families had moved away.¹

The U.S.-Mexican War (1846-48) transformed the San Diego region by drawing in new investors, among them David Lion Gardiner who came from New York to seek his fortune.

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during the Gold Rush. Uncomfortable with the reckless pursuit of profit that he witnessed in San Francisco, Gardiner set up a mercantile business in San Diego. He built the first stone house on Point Loma and owned what later became a valuable property adjoining the Santa Fe Railroad Depot downtown. His surviving letters to family members tell the story of his experience in California between 1849 and 1851. They also reveal the capitalist origins of modern San Diego.  

David Lion Gardiner (1816-1892) was descended from one of New York’s earliest English settlers. His ancestor Lion Gardiner (1599-1663) was a seventeenth-century military engineer employed on several projects in New England. In 1639, he purchased Gardiner’s Island, formerly Monchonock, from a native tribe and passed the property to male heirs and their descendants. Privateers and smugglers, including the legendary pirate Captain Kidd, frequently visited over the course of the eighteenth century. Occupied by British forces during the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, Gardiner’s Island is the only U.S. property still held as part of a royal grant from the English Crown. It remains the property of the Gardiner family. The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, a charitable foundation, continues to preserve the region’s tradition and heritage.  

Gardiner grew up among the educated elite of New York City and East Hampton, Long Island. His father David Gardiner, Sr. was a Yale College graduate, a lawyer, and a state senator. His mother Juliana MacLachlan descended from a Scottish Jacobite family who had amassed a brewing and real estate fortune in New York. The eldest of four children, Gardiner attended the Clinton Academy in East Hampton before matriculating at Princeton College and graduating in 1836. Admitted to the bar in 1842, he practiced law in New York and briefly served as an aide-de-camp to President John Tyler. His brother Alexander, meanwhile, was Clerk of the U.S. Circuit Court and an unofficial aid to the President. One sister, Margaret, married New York merchant John H. Beeckman, while another, Julia, married President Tyler in 1844. Julia served as First Lady for eight months before retiring with her husband to their plantation, Sherwood Forest in Virginia.  

Coming of age during a period of rapid social and economic change, Gardiner recognized that the future belonged to those willing to try their luck. As a young man, he had witnessed the arrival of the “Age of Steam” and the substantial fortunes derived from steamboats and textile mills. The Erie Canal (1825) opened the rich agricultural lands of the Midwest to settlement, beginning New York’s transformation from a third-rate port into a great commercial entrepôt. Upstart investors like Cornelius Vanderbilt were in the process of becoming very rich. The Gardiners, while wealthy, could not compete with the growing number of millionaires in New York City.
Gardiner was in his early thirties and unmarried when on December 5, 1848 President James Polk heralded the discovery of large quantities of gold in California. Not long afterwards, eastern newspapers began publishing articles testifying to

This map shows routes to the gold regions of California. Gardiner and his companions took “the cheapest, quickest, and safest” route, sailing to Vera Cruz and going overland to San Blas. Map of the Gold Regions of California by Ensigns & Thayer (David Rumsey Map Collection) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.
the abundance of riches and offering camping and mining equipment for sale. By early 1849, entrepreneurs in the New York area had begun to organize group trips to California. They offered passage either by sail around Cape Horn or by
steam to the Isthmus of Panama and on to San Francisco. Steam travel was not cheap, with costs as high as $600 per person (approximately $19,200 in 2016 dollars).

Some of the earliest companies to leave for California were composed of well-to-do easterners who could afford the price. An editorial in the New York Herald noted that many “educated, intelligent, civilized, and elevated men, of the best classes in society” had joined the Gold Rush. They did not necessarily intend to pan for gold but to increase their fortunes by selling dry goods and investing in land. Gardiner organized one such elite company. Intelligent and resourceful, he was open to new experiences and gifted at making friends. He was also a good judge of character who attracted men who were disciplined, stable, and interested in making money. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had just ended the U.S.-Mexican War, so it was only a matter of time before Alta California became a U.S. state.

In January 1849, Gardiner took sail on the Eugenia, a small vessel, along with fourteen companions, including Andrew H. Hitchcock, B.F. Voorhees, Lloyd Minturn, and Henry F. Smith. Voorhees, a correspondent for New York’s The Home Journal, wrote a series of articles about their adventure from New York, through Mexico, and up the coast to California. Gardiner, meanwhile, contributed letters about his experience to New York’s Journal of Commerce. They decided to follow the same route taken fewer than two years earlier by General Winfield Scott during the U.S.-Mexican War.

Gardiner and his company landed in Veracruz, Mexico, where they picked up two former U.S. Army wagons and made their way to Mexico City. It took them one month and $100 to reach their destination. Gardiner wrote, “It has been a constant matter of wonder to me how our army could have reached the city of Mexico against the obstacles thrown out by the Mexicans and the superior advantages they possessed in the way of natural defenses.” These obstacles included ravines, mountains, and narrow passes. They arrived in the capital on February 7, 1849, sunburned and flea bitten, having slept either outdoors in tents or indoors on the stone floors of corrales along with animals and fellow travelers.

In Mexico City, Gardiner spent a few weeks gathering supplies and doing some sightseeing. He viewed the cultural legacy of the Spanish Empire in the form of cathedrals, parks, and museums that held relics of the ancient history of Mexico. Arriving during the first week of carnival, he had the opportunity to attend a ball at the Gran Teatro Nacional, an enormous opera house constructed only a few years earlier. This was his first glimpse of the cosmopolitan splendor of Mexican elites. Although New York had nothing to compare to this scene, Gardiner acted the part of the patriot. He claimed that he did not see “a single handsome face” and that the elegant cuisine did not compare to the food he had tasted at home.
From there, Gardiner and his companions headed via Guadalajara to San Blas where they arranged passage on the bark *Mary Frances*. In San Blas, Gardiner found several hundred Americans, among other foreigners, awaiting passage to San Francisco. The more he saw of his countrymen, the more he appreciated the members of his party, all of whom were free from “dissipation and vices of every kind.”¹³ He saw his first gold nugget and heard tall tales of abundance. He came to believe that even if “millions of people” headed to Sacramento there would be enough gold for all.¹⁴ Had Gardiner paid closer attention, he might have realized that gold, like other mineral resources, would require intensive labor and a significant investment of capital. He saw, but did not understand, the significance of 60 lower-class Mexicans who traveled with them on the *Mary Frances*. They were being shipped to California to work the quicksilver mines of New Alameda by a British mercantile and banking firm—Barron, Forbes & Co. of Tepec, Jalisco.¹⁵

Gardiner and his party left the *Mary Frances* at Mazatlán and secured passage to San Francisco on the brig *Antonia*, a faster vessel filled mainly with American passengers. After a sea voyage of approximately 23 days, they arrived at the
fog-bound entrance to San Francisco Bay. On the morning of April 25, 1849, they made their way into the harbor. Gardiner’s first sight of San Francisco, with its roughly made clapboard houses, tents, and dusty streets, did not dampen his enthusiasm. He noted with astonishment the exceptionally high prices of real estate and the opportunities for profit, but he decided not to remain in the city. Determined “to see the elephant,” he headed directly to the goldfields.16

In May 1849, Gardiner and his party took a schooner up the Sacramento River to a landing three miles from Sutter’s Fort, which they found in a dilapidated state. Making their way up the North Fork of the American River they began dry digging, using picks and crowbars to cut through beds of slate rock while standing knee-deep in water. “Imagine a gang of Irish laborers at work digging at the bottom of a canal,” he wrote to his mother, “and you may form some idea of the figures we cut.”17

Gardiner found himself in good company among other East Coast elites. In Sacramento, he met the twenty-nine-year-old Archibald C. Peachy, an attorney for John Sumner who formerly had been a philosophy professor at The College of William and Mary.18 Gardiner also ran across Charles Upton Shepherd, a lecturer in natural history at Yale College, who was driving a team of oxen. “Persons coming here are all bent on making money,” he wrote, “and undertake anything for the sake of it.”19

Gardiner learned that several eastern political figures had made their way
to California, including: Wilson Shannon, a former congressman for Ohio who
had spent a year as Minister to Mexico; Thomas Butler King, a congressman from
Pennsylvania; and David C. Broderick, who had been politically active in New
York. He also encountered people he had known at home including “old Ross,”
his uncle’s overseer from Sag Harbor, and two seamen from East Hampton. He
told his mother, “Everyone expresses the utmost surprise at my being in California,
and I almost think sometimes that it is no place for me.”

Gardiner compared his rough-and-ready life in the goldfields to the refinement
of New York society and the comforts of life at home. He slept in a tent on the
bank of the river and rarely took off his clothes at night, at first claiming that he
enjoyed the “novelty” of the adventure and had never been in better health.

It was not long, however, before Gardiner was ready to give up on gold and
find another route to fortune. He wrote to his brother Alexander, “No amount of
gold would induce me to undergo the privation and suffering incident to a gold
digger’s life.” Instead, Gardiner planned to invest in land at the junction of the
Feather and Sacramento Rivers where he imagined there would one day be a large
town. He asked his brother to send him a dozen frame buildings in the cottage style
that could be rented from $2,500 to $3,500 per year. He also set up a mercantile
company in Sacramento with a partner, Benjamin W. Bean, a former New Yorker.
By August 1849, Gardiner had the reputation of being “one of the leading and most
successful pioneers.” Unfortunately, severe illness caused him to reconsider his
future as a Sacramento businessman. In the summer of 1849, he contracted typhoid
fever as a result of the crowded and unsanitary conditions at Bear Creek where he
and his partner had set up a trading post to sell goods to miners.

After recovering, Gardiner decided to relinquish his business interests and
return to San Francisco in September 1849. The city had changed dramatically
in the five months since his arrival in California. From a few adobe houses, tents,
and ramshackle houses grew a city filled with houses two- and three-stories high.
The harbor “astonishes the beholder;” he wrote,

Here, within the short span of a few months are collected some 500
vessels, principally large ships, and crowded within the circumference
of a mile the representatives of every nation under the sun including
the Musselman [Muslim], the Moor [North African], Chinese, and
Hindoo [Hindu], bringing with them the products of the east and
west in the greatest profusion; every foreign luxury is to be obtained
here at less rates even than in New York, while the products of our
own soil (California) are most difficult to obtain.
Gardiner stayed for a time in the home of naval officer Rodman McCamley Price, former prefect and alcalde (mayor) of Monterey and a delegate to the first constitutional convention of California. Other acquaintances in San Francisco included Julius K. Rose, a lawyer who later developed a winery in the Napa Valley; Charles P. Wilkins, son of a former Secretary of War; and Frank Turk who practiced law. Gardiner later took up residence in a boarding house run by a Mrs. Eager who formerly lived along the Hudson River just north of New York City. She had worked in the mines and accumulated what Gardiner described as “quite a snug property.” He came across news of his brother-in-law John Beeckman who, with his cousin Henry Beeckman Livingston, had headed to Sacramento to set up a mercantile operation with Gardiner’s former partner, Benjamin W. Bean. Gardiner’s friends who had accompanied him through Mexico, meanwhile, had returned from the diggings to take up work in business or law. He remarked, “I am so constantly meeting familiar faces that I, at times, hardly realize the fact of being so far from home.”

Gardiner might have stayed in San Francisco but the chaotic nature of the market and his lack of capital persuaded him that he could make no great fortune there. Prices fluctuated wildly, and it was impossible to determine what commodities might be needed at any given time. Gardiner wrote to his brother, “You can form no idea of the state of the market from one week to another or hardly from one day, its fluctuations are so great.” He was also troubled by the windy and damp weather, which he considered not at all “conducive to longevity.” He wrote, “I think this the most disagreeable climate and gloomy winter I ever experienced.”
In early February 1850, Gardiner decided to make his way down the coast to San Diego where the development of a new town promised opportunities for trade and real estate development. He understood that San Diego had one of the best harbors on the coast, and that steamers regularly stopped on their way to and from Panama. It was also the point of embarkation for ‘49ers who had crossed the plains via the Santa Fe Trail and were bound for San Francisco. The Daily Alta California reported in December 1849 that the port of San Diego had “taken quite a start. Quite a number of Americans have gone down there recently and established themselves in business for the winter. A number of frame houses are in the process of erection and many others are being shipped from this port [San Francisco]. The town is represented to us as being quite a bustling, lively, little place.”

Gardiner’s companion in this venture was fellow New Yorker John R. Bleecker. The nephew of the auctioneer and real estate agent Anthony J. Bleecker, John Bleecker had energy, integrity, and “considerable business capacity.” Together, they invested several thousand dollars in commodities suited to the San Diego market including flour, coffee, tea, and other dry goods. At the time, San Diego’s trade was chiefly with the inhabitants of Sonora and Baja California, Mexico. They also contracted with Captain Lawrence B. Edwards and the crew of the schooner Sierra Nevada for the delivery of 63,000 feet of high quality lumber to San Diego, where building materials were relatively scarce. Purchasing the load at $150 per thousand feet, a contract that was considered “very favorable” among other San Francisco businessmen, Gardiner bragged, “no one supposed but that I should realize several thousand dollars immediately upon my arrival” in San Diego.

Gardiner arrived in San Diego on February 20, 1850. A former Mexican pueblo, San Diego was a recently established county in the State of California. Built of adobe, it still looked much like the Mexican villages that Gardiner had traveled through on his way to the Pacific Ocean. But it was set apart by its reputation for agricultural products: “the finest grapes and every variety of vegetable as well as grass and grain in abundance, cattle are also plenty.”

A sketch of San Diego harbor, c. 1850. ©SDHC #9497-17.
Mexican rule, thousands of acres of land had been turned into cattle ranches operated by Alta California families like the Argüellos, Alvarados, and the Estudillos.

In the 1850s, San Diego had a growing population of Americans, Peruvians, Hawaiian Islanders, and Europeans, among others. Gardiner estimated that 1,000 people lived there, but he expected that number to increase rapidly as the city was the terminus of the southern route across the Great Plains. Drawing on an old trope about the “indolence” of the Mexican inhabitants, Gardiner told his brother that he anticipated “an entire change” with the arrival of Yankee settlers who knew how to exploit such resources.43

Soldiers, ship captains, and merchants were among the early American residents of San Diego. Gardiner met a number of U.S. Army officers who lived at La Playa, located at the southwest end of Point Loma, in a wood frame house occupied by Major Samuel P. Heintzelman and his wife. William Heath Davis also lived there with his wife María de Jesus Estudillo and her mother.44 Cave J. Coutts owned the Colorado House in the plaza at Old Town and married into the Bandini family. John Stewart, a sailor and carpenter from Maine, lived with his wife Rosa in an adobe now known as the Casa de Machado y Stewart. Thomas Wrightington, who also married into the Machado family, operated a general store. Philip Crosthwaite, a young Irishman who had arrived in California in 1845, married María Josefa López and settled in the pueblo. Other residents included Abel Stearns, Jonathan (Juan José) Warner, Henry D. Fitch, James W. Robinson, and Louis Rose.45 Gardiner noted that one early settler, Albert B. Smith, had led such a secluded life that “he had almost forgotten his friends and country until the incursions of Yankees after the war awoke him from his slumbers.”46

Gardiner and Bleecker did not have immediate success in their capitalist enterprise because a large quantity of timber had been unloaded and sold just days before the arrival of the Sierra Nevada. Gardiner, however, was not unduly concerned, particularly as they managed to sell 3,000 feet at $200 per thousand
to the U.S. Army for barracks to be built in La Playa. He expected the price of lumber to reach as high as $300 per thousand in the winter of 1851, particularly if immigration continued at the same rate.47

Andrew B. Gray’s map of the Port of San Diego, c. 1850. ©SDHC Archives.
Soon after their arrival, Gardiner and Bleecker obtained a lot just east of La Playa and began to construct the first stone building in San Diego. The crew of the *Sierra Nevada*—four were carpenters from Sag Harbor, Long Island—helped to build it. Gardiner wrote, “It appears a little singular that after an absence of more than a year from home that I should be surrounded in this distant portion of the globe by a number of my own people and they engage in erecting the first business house in a new town on the Pacific.”

The house went up quickly, to the surprise of many. “The constructing of a building of its size in four days perfectly astonishes the natives,” Gardiner wrote, “and they hardly know what to make of it, when they see sailors turning their hands with such facility to carpentering, they cannot comprehend how a man can be a carpenter and sailor at the same time.” He estimated that “it would take them six months to put up a building which could be accomplished by Yankees in as many days.” This was due to the fact that adobe houses were notoriously difficult to build, requiring as many as 1,000 mud blocks.

By the time it was finished, San Diegans had christened it the “Grande Casa.” At 1,280 square feet and two stories high, it was one of the more substantial structures in San Diego. Gardiner used the first floor as a store and office and divided the second floor into four rooms. “It is decidedly the best house in this part of California,” he told his mother, as it was both comfortable and warm. It was also conveniently located for commercial activities as it fronted the harbor. “The steamers anchor within a stone’s throw of it,” he wrote, “and their mails are opened in my office.”

Gardiner anticipated that the development of mercantile operations would end the dominance of Boston merchants operating sailing vessels along the Pacific Coast. In the past, U.S.-owned ships visited Alta California ports two or three times per year with an assorted cargo. It was the custom to give several fandangos (Spanish dances) on board. After partying for days, sometimes even weeks, the captain would open up his hold and commence trading. Gardiner wrote,
“Immense fortunes have been acquired in this trade, but the system will now be abolished by merchants and traders on shore.” Already, the enterprise shown by “new adventurers” had taken the old ones by surprise “and by competition entirely outstripped them.”

There was also potential for a whaling industry in San Diego. From the deck of the schooner, Gardiner saw numerous California gray whales, many of them between 50 and 60 feet in length. One could produce 60 pounds of oil. They came within a hundred yards of Sierra Nevada, “gambling and frolicking about” with their spouts ascending into the air on all sides. Because of the economic value of this information, Gardiner asked his mother, to whom he was writing, to either destroy his letter or keep it safe.

Gardiner and Bleecker looked forward to the growth of a new town in San Diego. In early 1850, plans were well underway for a 32-square-block development located on the southern end of the harbor, facing Coronado. Although the area depended on regular shipments of potable water from Old Town, it had the potential to be a commercial center. Andrew B. Gray, then a surveyor for the U.S. Boundary Commission, and William Heath Davis, together with José Antonio Aguirre, Miguel de Pedrorena, and the local army quartermaster, Lieutenant Thomas D. Johns, obtained a deed that allowed them to subdivide the area and build a substantial wharf and warehouse. They persuaded the Army to build additional barracks in what later would be called New Town. Gardiner and Bleecker, meanwhile, purchased property at the foot of D Street (now Broadway). On April 3, 1850, Gardiner wrote, “Capitalists have within a few weeks commenced the building of houses and wharfs by which I hope to be largely benefited.”

Bleecker proved to be a good business partner: temperate, economical, and “fond of making money.” Gardiner wrote, “I should not be surprised if we should continue in business together while we remain in California.” They accepted only cash transactions and by the autumn of 1850 had formed a limited partnership that advertised itself as “Gardiner & Bleecker, Shipping and Commission Merchants, San Diego, California.” The partners typically started their day at 6 a.m. While
one prepared breakfast, the other attended to trading. If he had no business to occupy his time, Gardiner would take a small boat across the bay to Coronado. Sometimes he took his gun to shoot rabbits, ducks, and quail; other times he fished for their supper. Occasionally, he and Bleecker would kill a seal so that they could use its oil in their lamps.  

Gardiner’s only complaint was lack of variety in his diet. In April 1850, he wrote, “I have not tasted of a potatoes [sic] or vegetable of any kind for more than a month. Fish and bird constitute with hard bread our principal diet.” The soil and climate produced abundant fruit and vegetables, but the natives only cultivated enough for their own use. Gardiner wrote, “The time will soon arrive when gardening will receive attention and will prove a greater source of wealth than the gold mines to those who first enter into the business.”

One evening, while dining in Old Town, Gardiner encountered a former acquaintance, Dr. John Conger, the brother of Abraham B. Conger, a New York lawyer. Conger had taken the southern route across the U.S. and “suffered considerable privations and fatigues.” Rather than head to the goldfields he remained in San Diego. He earned a living teaching several Spanish-speaking young people in Old Town while continuing to practice medicine, a profession that Gardiner hoped “never to have need of.”

Conger, along with Lieutenant Thomas W. Sweeney and Henry C. Matsell, were engaged in a scheme to grow vegetables on a 400-acre farm located in a valley seven or eight miles from San Diego. Gardiner was dubious about their ability to run such an operation, writing that they appeared “entirely ignorant of both the theory and practice of farming.” He later noted that the farm had not

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House of José Antonio Aguirre built before 1830, NE corner of San Diego Avenue and Twiggs Street, 1909. ©SDHC #1135.
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achieved its potential due to the “mismanagement and ignorance of Conger.”

Other new settlers had considerably more savvy. Gardiner spent a good deal of time in the company of Davis, Heintzelman, and John E. Summers, all of whom were “agreeable companions and sociably inclined.” They shared a desire to turn San Diego into a port of entry. Collector of Customs James Collier, meanwhile, was Lobbying Congress to make San Francisco the only port of entry along the California coast. This would mean that cities like San Diego and Santa Barbara might pay as much as 300 percent more for imports due to the high rates of freight. Gardiner and his friends even talked about foiling Collier’s “selfish interests” by turning Southern California into a separate territory or state.

In 1850, Congress conceded port of entry privileges to San Diego and other coastal cities as a test before making a final decision. Ultimately, San Francisco was chosen as the only port of entry on the California coast. Gardiner petitioned his brother Alexander for assistance in having him appointed Collector of Customs for San Diego. Alexander was well connected politically and in touch with their brother-in-law, the former President Tyler. Although party politics were unlikely to influence the selection of officers in such a remote state as California, Gardiner still asked his brother to forward his request to Tyler who, in turn, could relay it to Millard Fillmore who had recently stepped from Vice President to President after the death of President Zachary Taylor. Gardiner emphasized, “You know I supported General Taylor’s election.” Failing in that attempt, he later asked Alexander to procure for him “some fat office here,” writing that he could not afford to take any government position that “did not pay well.”

By 1851, Gardiner had become far more realistic about the possibility of
making a fortune in California. His brother Alexander, on the other hand, continued to ship pre-fabricated houses, wagons, and foodstuffs from New York to San Francisco in the hopes that they would realize a substantial profit. Again and again, Gardiner warned him about the uncertainty of the market, expressing frustration with his credulity. “It appears to me that every person who comes here is at once supposed to become a millionaire, almost the moment he enters the golden gate, and should he be here six months and his name be connected with some new town speculation he at once gains a reputation for immense wealth in the States.” In reality, two-thirds of those who realized a fortune “became as suddenly bankrupt.”

The death of two family members caused Gardiner to consider leaving California. In 1850, Gardiner learned that his brother-in-law John Beeckman had died as a result of accidentally discharging his gun. The shot went through his right lung, killing him instantly. In March 1851, Gardiner received news that Alexander had died at the age of thirty-one as the result of a short illness. Shocked, he found it hard to come to terms with the fact that he would never see his brother’s face again. He wrote to his sister Margaret, “It is a source of constant anxiety to me that I am so far separated from you all.”

San Diego, meanwhile, was booming. In the summer of 1851, New Town boasted a 600-foot long wharf at the foot of present day Market Street, hotels, and saloons. Davis, a leading promoter, bought a number of pre-framed lumber “salt
box” homes from New England. Other entrepreneurs included Ephraim W. Morse, a Massachusetts farmer and schoolteacher who set up a trading house in New Town with his partner Levi Slack.\textsuperscript{72} Ames & Pendleton operated a wholesale and retail operation on California Street, while George F. Hooper kept a general store on Fourth Street. The city also acquired its first newspaper, \textit{The San Diego Herald}.\textsuperscript{73} At the center of the new development was a plaza named after Juan Pantoja, the Spanish navigator and cartographer who mapped San Diego Bay in 1782.\textsuperscript{74}

Gardiner, however, felt the need to leave his business interests and return to New York. The journey through Mexico was now made easier by the establishment of an express line that transported passengers from Acapulco to Veracruz in 18 days. He took the brig \textit{Nenuphar} from Veracruz and arrived in New York on June 5, 1851.\textsuperscript{75} By July, he was once again involved in business, this time investing in real estate on behalf of his mother. He took up residence in the family house, Castleton Hill on Staten Island, where he remained until a bitter dispute with his sister Julia about the management of family property. In 1860, Gardiner married a distant cousin, Sarah Gardiner Thompson, daughter of a wealthy New York financier.\textsuperscript{76}

San Diego did not develop as quickly as Gardiner and other early investors had anticipated. In the 1850s, San Francisco was the main port of entry on the Pacific Coast, limiting the development of other coastal cities. Army engineer and humorist Lieutenant George Horatio Derby visited San Diego in 1853 and
joked, “the calm waters of San Diego Bay remain unruffled by keel or cutwater from one year’s end to another.” He found two crazy old hulks at anchor at La Playa, a boarding house, and “a store marked Gardiner & Bleecker [sic]...the inside of which nothing could be bleaker, for ‘there’s nothing in it.’”77

New Town also failed spectacularly. After losing a fortune in a San Francisco fire, Davis could no longer afford to make investments in New Town. In 1852 and 1853, houses and businesses relocated to Old Town and the wharf was allowed to disintegrate. With the outbreak of the Civil War, U.S. Army troops were transferred to the East, leaving the barracks nearly empty. In 1867, a merchant from San Francisco, Alonzo E. Horton, was able to purchase 960 acres, called “Davis’s Folly,” for the bargain price of $265 ($4,380 in 2016 dollars).78

It was not until many years later that Gardiner’s investment in San Diego
paid off. He and Bleecker held on to the land that they had purchased at the foot of D Street (Broadway) in 1850, save for a right of way granted to the California Southern Railroad. In the 1880s, railroad speculation put pressure on them to sell. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, having absorbed the California Southern and the Atlantic & Pacific, built a new depot in 1887, just opposite their property on D Street. This land was needed to secure a franchise along the waterfront. In January 1888, they sold the property to Charles A. Wetmore for over $40,000 (over $1 million in 2016 dollars). *The San Diego Union* described this as a “notable sale,” even at a time when the real estate market was booming.79

By this time, Gardiner was 72 years old, with little need for such a bounty. After the Civil War, he and his wife had lived a comfortable, if not opulent, life in Europe, returning to New York City in 1885. Their eldest son David inherited Sagtikos Manor in West Islip, Long Island, which had been occupied by the Thompson and Gardiner families since 1697. Their daughter Sarah Diodati Gardiner became a miniature painter traveling between New York and Paris. The youngest, Robert Alexander Gardiner, graduated from Yale and went into finance. In 1892, Gardiner died of pneumonia in his West Fifty-Seventh Street home.80 His grandson Robert David Lion Gardiner and granddaughter Alexandra Gardiner Creel later inherited the family estate on Gardiner’s Island.

The story of David Lion Gardiner’s experiences adds to the context in which San Diego developed in the mid-nineteenth century. Its early residents, including the ‘49ers, were not gunslingers and gamblers prone to lawlessness and violence, as popularized in fictional tales. Instead, they were men and women eager to benefit from an expanding capitalist economy. In San Diego they found a temperate climate, an excellent harbor, and a population of educated and cultured people of Anglo, Spanish, and Mexican descent. It was a place where money could be made while still enjoying “the beauties of nature surrounding us,” as one early resident wrote.81 San Diego continues to offer that promise today.
NOTES


9. David L. Gardiner (hereafter DLG) to Juliana M. Gardiner, Mazatlán, March 28, 1849, BANC MSS 2006/127 Box 1, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley. Unless otherwise noted, all letters from DLG are from the above collection.


11. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, Mexico City, February 7, 1849, Bancroft Library.

12. Ibid.


14. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, Mazatlán, March 31, 1849, Bancroft Library.

15. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, Mazatlán, March 28, 1849, Bancroft Library.

16. DLG to Sir [John Tyler], San Francisco, September 1849, Bancroft Library.

17. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, Sacramento City, June 15, 1849, Bancroft Library.


19. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, Sacramento City, June 15, 1849, Bancroft Library.
20. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, July 1, 1849, Bancroft Library.
21. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, Bear River, July 21, 1849, Bancroft Library.
22. Ibid.
23. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, Sacramento City, June 15, 1849, Bancroft Library.
24. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, July 1, 1849, Bancroft Library.
25. Ibid.
26. Gardiner later had considerable difficulty in obtaining the profits from his share of the partnership. Bean went on to partner with Gardiner’s brother-in-law Beeckman to develop a new town, Butterville. Alexander Gardiner to Julia Gardiner Tyler, New York, June 7, 1850, John H. Beeckman Papers, California State Library, Sacramento. See also DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Diego, January 18, 1851, Tyler Family Papers, Group G, Box 2, Folder 3, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
27. John H. Beeckman to Margaret Gardiner Beeckman, August 7, 1849, Beeckman MSS, Sacramento.
28. Ibid. Gardiner’s servant James Robinson, a black steward and waiter, cared for him during his illness. Gardiner told his brother that Robinson, “known to the best families” of Charlestown, MA, had died at Sacramento City in October 1849, and requested that a notice be placed in a Charlestown newspaper so that his friends would know of his passing. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, January 31, 1850, Bancroft Library.
30. Price was not elected to the House of Representatives for California, sold his property, and returned to New Jersey where he was elected to Congress in 1851 and later served as the Governor of New Jersey. Gardiner estimated that Price invested $2,500 and returned home with $200,000. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, November 30, 1849, Bancroft Library.
31. Gardiner reported that Charles P. Wilkins was said to have disgraced himself by appropriating several thousand dollars from the Quartermaster Depot and decamping to Sonoma. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, September 30, 1849, Bancroft.
33. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, September 30, 1849, Bancroft Library.
34. Gardiner told his mother that, like thousands of others, none of his companions had been successful at the mines: “[Andrew H.] Hitchcock is here doing nothing at present, i.e., lying upon his oars—[Lloyd] Minturn is at Pueblo San Jose keeping a hotel and speculating in real estate—[B.F.] Voorhees who wrote for the ‘Home Journal’ is engaged in mercantile pursuits and doing a profitable business.” DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, November 30, 1849, Bancroft Library.
36. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, July 31, 1850, Bancroft Library.
37. DLG to Sir [John Tyler], San Francisco, September 1849, Bancroft Library.
38. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, January 31, 1850, Bancroft Library.
40. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, January 31, 1849.
41. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, San Diego, March 3, 1850, Bancroft Library. The Sierra Nevada belonged to Oliver Wade and William C. Sleight of Sag Harbor, New York. The crew consisted of carpenters and other craftsmen from Long Island who ran the vessel in return for three-fifths of her earnings. They included Captain Edwards and his brother Osborn Edwards; first
mate Charles B. Loper; and Nathan Hedges, a son of Captain S. Hedges of East Hampton.

42. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Diego, March 3, 1850, Bancroft Library.

43. Ibid. In 1850, the population of San Diego County was 798, with 650 people living in the city. Engstrand, *San Diego: California’s Cornerstone*, 78-79.

44. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, San Diego, March 3, 1850, Bancroft Library.


46. Smith left San Diego for New York in February 1851 to visit some friends. He took with him a letter of introduction from Gardiner to his brother Alexander. Gardiner described Smith as “a very worthy but plain uneducated man. He came out here many years since on board a vessel engaged in the hide aging business on this coast, and has resided here ever since, having married a Spanish woman.” He told his brother, “If you have anything to send me when he is ready to return you could not probably entrust to safer hands.” DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Diego, February 3, 1851, Tyler Family Papers, Group G, Box 2, Folder 3, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.


48. Ibid. Gardiner described Captain Edwards as “a very kind man thus far,” adding, “the whole crew have shown me much respect and a desire to advance my undertakings. I have reason to be satisfied with the manner in which they have fulfilled their contract.”

49. Ibid.


51. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, San Diego, April 3, 1850, Beeckman MSS, Sacramento.

52. Ibid.

53. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, San Diego, March 3, 1850, Bancroft Library.

54. Ibid.


56. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, San Diego, April 3, 1850, Beeckman MSS, Sacramento.

57. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Diego, May 3, 1850, Bancroft Library.


59. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, San Diego, April 3, 1850, Beeckman MSS, Sacramento.

60. Ibid.

61. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Diego, May 3, 1850, Bancroft Library.


63. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Diego, May 3, 1850, Bancroft Library. Gardiner described Matsell as the brother of George W. Matsell, the chief of police in New York City.

64. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, San Diego, June 3, 1850, Bancroft Library.
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65. DLG to Juliana M. Gardiner, San Diego, April 3, 1850, Beeckman MSS, Sacramento.
66. Other cities were Sacramento, Benicia, Stockton, Monterey, and San Pedro. Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of California, 1860-1890, Vol. 7 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890), 141.
67. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Diego, November 2, 1850, Bancroft Library.
68. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Diego, December 3, 1850, Bancroft Library.
69. DLG to Alexander Gardiner, San Francisco, August 31, 1850, Bancroft Library. For information on the goods shipped to California, see Alexander Gardiner Account Book, 1831-1851, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
70. Henry B. Livingston to Gilbert L. Beeckman, Fremont, April 27, 1850, Beeckman MSS Sacramento. Gardiner helped Beeckman’s cousin Henry B. Livingston solve issues surrounding the estate.
71. DLG to Margaret Gardiner Beeckman, March 15, 1851, Yale University Library, Gardiner-Tyler Family Papers, MS 230, Box 14, Folder 349.
72. Smythe, History of San Diego, 1542-1908, 281.
73. Ibid., 318.
75. “Pleasant Route to and from California,” The San Diego Herald, June 5, 1851, 2; “Arrived,” New-York Spectator, June 5, 1851.
81. Andrew Belcher Gray to William Heath Davis (copy), New Orleans, April 27, 1851, “Gray, Andrew B.,” vertical file, SDHC.
Tourmaline Canyon: 
Surfers vs. Homeowners during the 1960s

By Brooke Johnson Schmitt

Beach access and development are complex issues in coastal communities worldwide. In California alone the list of stakeholders is long: recreationalists, property owners, and residents; local state and federal governments and agencies; biologists, archeologists, environmentalists, researchers, and educational institutions; commercial fishermen, boat captains, and longshoremen; oil, construction, shipping, power and development companies; the Coast Guard, Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps; and surfers. In the 1,100 miles from the Tijuana Sloughs to South Beach, Crescent City, there have been many battles in the California beach access war. The fight has played out in the media, the courts, and the legislature, ultimately leading to the establishment of the formidable California Coastal Commission in 1972. One such fight is currently happening north of San Francisco in San Mateo County over access rights to Martin Beach. It is one

Windansea Beach, La Jolla, 1954. ©SDHC #S2082-1.

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in a long list that grows exponentially when taking into consideration beach communities on a global scale.

The following is an in-depth look into one such conflict that erupted in San Diego, California, during the first half of the 1960s. By this time, surfers had joined the coastal access fight as both antagonists and advocates. The struggle is gleaned largely the same way average citizens of San Diego would have seen it—through the lens of newspaper articles published in The San Diego Union and Evening Tribune. In a time when headlines were dominated by the Cold War, the Space Race, Nazi war criminal trials, the Civil Rights Movement, and Vietnam, these events received a remarkable amount of media coverage.

**Tourmaline Canyon, 1960-1967**

During World War II, Carlos Tavares was a concrete ship builder, but when the war ended, he turned to real estate.¹ In San Diego County, Tavares helped to develop much of Pacific Beach, San Carlos, Chula Vista, and Clairemont (named after his wife); in addition, he built subdivisions in the California communities of Rocklin, Novato, and Whittier.² In the early 1960s he owned a parcel of vacant land in San Diego Pueblo lot 1783 on the north edge of Pacific Beach and the south side of La Jolla. The land encompassed all of Tourmaline Canyon—from Loring Street and Mission Boulevard to Wrelton Drive and Turquoise Street—down to the mean high tide line. It was void of streets, curbs, residences, concrete and
Tourmaline Canyon: Surfers vs. Homeowners

devlopment. At the corner of Loring and Mission, La Jolla Boulevard did not veer to the left and travel north as it does today; it started at Turquoise Street. A person standing in the middle of Tourmaline Canyon in 1960 might have thought him/herself to be somewhere in Baja California. It looked like no man’s land; in reality, it belonged to Carlos Tavares.

The area, referred to as “The Canyon” by local surfers at the time, was used as beach access and camping grounds. Tourmaline in the early 1960s was not the break it is today, a family-friendly longboard haven. It was mostly rocks with little sand, and approximately 20 years passed before that changed. Nobody surfed near there during the summer months but, during the winter, especially when big north swells were closing out the beach breaks, the froth factor around adjacent Pacific Beach (PB) Point—also called Sun Gold Point, False Point, and Gunners Point—was high. The main access to the point was not through Tourmaline Canyon, but through the nearby neighborhood at the foot of Linda Way and what is now Sea Ridge Drive. For half of the year, the surrounding area was a quiet, surfer-free neighborhood, but surfing was growing. The city was restricting surfing on bathing beaches so, when the surf was up, residents would find surfers parking, changing, hooting, honking, and generally “amping” up their neighborhood. It got so bad that the kind of disturbances that happen in any neighborhood were blamed on surfers. The presence of surfers in the neighborhood became such a contentious subject that, by the winter of 1960-1961, residents from the Sun Gold...
Point subdivision were gearing up to put a stop to surfing in the area.

1960-61: Protests and Ordinances

On December 17, 1960, big surf, warm weather, and Christmas vacations brought an unusual number of surfers to Pacific Beach and La Jolla. Lew Scarr, a columnist for The San Diego Union wrote:

By the narrow gauge of the clock, Dec. 17 [1960], from sunrise to sunset was a disaster...Dec. 17, a Sunday, was a meteorological freak, even for San Diego. A capricious Santa Ana condition brought 80-degree temperatures to San Diego and only San Diego. A petulant ocean warmed itself to near 70 degrees. And, wonder of wonders, the surf was also up. That universal cry, ‘Surf’s Up!’ was carried by the wind...throughout Southern California and every surfer who could remember where he last put his cake of paraffin shot the tube for San Diego. Surfers arrived in San Diego by the thousands, descending on...Windansea...In the time that it takes a lifeguard to grab a bullhorn, Windansea was jammed with boards. Soon, they spilled onto no-surfing beaches north and south. Flower beds and lawns in nearby homes were trampled in the crush, and in these places, residents raised hackles. The nearest street corner was good enough for a dressing room for some. Incredulous citizens thought jail was too good for others.4

Many residents panicked. One sobbing woman telephoned Les Earnest, San Diego City Park and Recreation Director and told him that “she feared surfboarders would actually tear her home down.”5 Captain Carl A. Schlack, USN Ret., complained on behalf of local residents.6 One night, surfers and young people had congregated on the beach below his house. He awoke in the morning to find that gasoline had been poured on his lawn and burned. He complained of broken windows, destroyed garden, surfboards on his lawn, an irritated pet boxer, and surfers that cut through his property to get to the beach. On December 27, 1960, the Pacific Beach Coordinating Council met to address the growing tensions. Schlack told the group, “I’ve had enough. It’s gotten to the point where my wife and I are afraid to leave the home because of the damage that could occur to it or us.”7 Don Vynne, San Diego City Aquatics Superintendent, added “The devil is breaking loose on the beaches...Suddenly homeowners have had enough. I’m checking reports on 24 miles of beach frontage about kids gathering in gangs at night and raising the devil.”8
A recent change in the nature of the sport had drawn more teenagers into surfing. Vynne explained, “Three years ago a surfboard weighed 150 pounds and it took a big man to handle one...Now they weigh 45 pounds and it seems like every kid in San Diego owns one.” Local surf clubs denied any involvement in the incident, but Schlack was persistent, saying, “I know who they were. I have proof.” He added, “It is an expression of decay that occurs in a great nation...When they feel that everything belongs to them, they’re playing the Communist role.”

Around this time, many surf access disputes were happening up and down the coast of California. Similar conflicts were occurring in Laguna Beach, Oceanside, and Carmel. In Maroubra Beach, Australia, south of Sydney, surfers were being blamed for “cluttering up the beach” and “party-crashing on a grand scale.” In San Diego alone there were several neighborhoods that were logging grievances against young surfers. The ones who gained the most traction in the media, however, were in the residents of the Sun Gold Point subdivision in south La Jolla and Law Street in north Pacific Beach.

The meeting of the Pacific Beach Coordinating Council—attended by 25 people including Vynne, Les Earnest, and San Diego City Councilman Ross Tharp—resulted in the proposal of 5 possible regulations:
1. Assign a senior lifeguard to work with surfers to set up clubs and assist in helping them regulate their own activities.
2. Relocate surfboarding areas away from residential districts.
3. Modify the present ordinances to further restrict the number of surfing areas, a step which Earnest said he [preferred] not to take.
4. Require a license for surfboards.
5. Set hourly limits on surfing.14

In the days following, City Park and Recreation Director Les Earnest reinforced his support for relocating surfing areas and back-pedaled from his initial stances on surfboard licensing and restricting surfing areas. On December 29, 1960, at a meeting of the San Diego City Council, the proposal of a surfboard licensing law was ruled out after a close examination of the Laguna Beach ordinance. In agreement were Les Earnest, Police Chief Jensen, and City Attorney Jean DePaul, deeming such a law unenforceable. Earnest came to the conclusion that the answer would be:

1. Restrict surfboarding to the six areas [then] designated for the sport, where more patrolling [would] be ordered. They [were] La Jolla Shores, Windansea, two beaches in Pacific Beach, South Mission, and Ocean Beach and
2. Closer coordination of the surfing clubs, the city, and property owners.15

Earnest tried to justify this shift in viewpoint by saying, “The remaining six beaches are big enough for all the surfing we have now and we can open more areas as the need arises.”16

As this story played out in the media, many concerned citizens wrote in both major San Diego newspapers and expressed their views in a number of editorials and letters to editors. The coverage of the story weighed heavily on the side of the residents, but these editorials gave surfers their first voice in the matter:

- With all the fuss about surfers, the places they surf, and the things a few of them do, I feel that something should be said for the surfers.17 - John G. Paul

- Surfing and vandalism have nothing in common. Surfing is a clean, healthful, challenging sport. The vandalism is the product of certain members of our society.18 - Neil Larsen
It seems to me that beach and property owners don’t like people. With the growth in our population, where are we poor souls to go, but in the ocean?19 - Mrs. B. Luther

It would be nice for a change if we had somebody to represent us.20 - Pat Fiddler

Pathways leading to surfing areas would ‘eliminate 90 percent of the problem’ created by surfers having to cross private property to get to beaches.21 - John Anderson, CA State Beach Head Lifeguard

The time has come to defend the people who surf. Their freedom to ride the ocean waves is being endangered by proposed punitive legislation designed to make surfing semi-extinct.22 - Mrs. Robert W. Town

The complaints of householders about vandalism and rowdyism should naturally be given proper attention; however, this element has nothing to do with surfing or any other sport. It is a case of delinquent human behavior and should be dealt with accordingly.23 - A.A. Rose

On January 4, 1961, Schlack published his own editorial in the form of a letter to the editor bearing the title, “All Parents Should Know of the Red Menace.” He
suggested that the editor publish more articles to show “how parents may become or be unknowing tools of the Communist cause through lack of close supervision and control of their children.” He made the following comments with regard to his recent experiences with local surfers and their parents:

The laxity in discipline of children and juveniles...seem effective softening methods preparing youth for the acceptance of the communist doctrine. Ridicule of the policeman, demands by parents and others to reduce the authority of those sworn to uphold the law particularly as it pertains to juveniles on the pretext that it is brutality, are but a sample. In general, the trend towards lack of self-discipline and disrespect for authority makes youth and many adults ripe for plucking by those who would undermine our way of life.24

Twelve days after his letter to the editor was published, Schlack attended a quarterly meeting of the La Jolla Town Council held at the La Jolla Community Center. At the meeting Claude Ford, chairman of the parks and beaches committee, told trustees, “Eventually it will be a necessity to consider a surfboard a deadly weapon just as an automobile.”25 Ford argued, presumably with Schlack in agreement, that surfers and/or their parents should be required to have liability
insurance. At the same meeting, trustees voted to sponsor a six-week adult education course through the Northwest Adult School called “Democracy vs. Communism.” Meanwhile, the Pacific Beach Town Council met and adopted a resolution that they then passed on to the San Diego City Council suggesting, “More supervision, not a change in surfing areas.”

One solution was to get young surfing fans organized into clubs. Vynne told of the effort to “get surfers to organize into self-policing clubs to reduce rowdyism.” It was reported that about 175 surfers had signed up for five main clubs including:

- Ocean Beach Surf Club, 40 members, ages 13-16.
- Sunset Cliffs Surf Club, 30 members, ages 16-19.
- South Mission Beach Surfing Club, 40 members, ages 13-16.
- The Mallihines, a girls’ club, 21 members, ages 14-19.
- La Jolla Shores Surf Club, 40 members, ages 16-18.

Vynne, told of an upcoming mass meeting of club members, said, “We hope to have more clubs and eventually have a surfing council composed of representatives from each club to plan contests and entertainment events.” These hopes would come to fruition in the following years.

In February 1961, despite the Pacific Beach Town Council resolution, the City
of San Diego introduced an ordinance that would relocate some surfing and swimming areas in Pacific Beach and open up new ones. The changes would switch existing surfing areas away from residential areas and into commercial zones. Opposing the ordinance was a representative from the council who presented a petition signed by seventy-one business owners who complained that their customers and hotel guests would be inconvenienced by moving the swimming areas. An attorney for one of the motel owners said, “300 feet is a long way to walk for an elderly person, a person carrying beach equipment, and children.”

Despite the petition, the city moved forward with Ordinance No. 8452, moving the surfing zone from Law Street and replacing it with a swim zone. Councilman Tharp explained, “The question was whether you should have the rowdyism in a residential area or in a commercial area which has more parking spaces and can be more easily policed. We wouldn’t allow a trampoline center or a miniature golf course in a residential area, so why should we allow a recreational activity like surfing?” Les Earnest said, “This is an attempt to get something that will be acceptable to most people. We know some people will be unhappy no matter which way we go.”

Ordinance No. 8452 did not, however, appease the residents of the Sun Gold Point subdivision, whose area remained undesignated. Schlack, for one, applied to the City Engineer’s Office for a permit to install a fence at the foot of Linda
Way in order to bar access to the beach. He also brought twenty-five La Jollans before the City Council to seek a surfing ban on beaches below the subdivision. They reported, “women [were] afraid to walk in front of their homes and that police [had] been called to the subdivision 45 times since November in response to rowdyism complaints.” The group presented a petition signed by seventy residents; photographs showing teenagers drinking and changing clothes; a diary of incidents that Schlack had kept since December; and movies taken on the beach. Schlack said, “We beg with you, we plead with you to help us...We are helpless.”

In response to resident outcry, a two-person committee consisting of San Diego councilmen George Kerrigan and Ross Tharp was appointed to look into the disputes between surfers and ocean front residents. Based on the committee’s findings, the San Diego City Council ordered a study of San Diego’s ocean front. Kerrigan explained that he foresaw a time where increased private land ownership would continue to block access. He said, “Unless we do some orderly planning now, we’re going to have more and more problems in the future.” The solution being explored involved the city’s purchase of land in the Tourmaline Canyon.

On March 31, 1961, the San Diego City Council proposed an ordinance restricting surfing to certain designated between Ocean Beach and La Jolla and making it a misdemeanor offense to surf outside those areas. If adopted, the ordinance would:

…restrict surfers to seven areas, totaling about one mile of beach at: 1. Foot of Newport Avenue in Ocean Beach. 2. South Mission Beach. 3. Foot of Pacific Beach Drive in North Mission Beach. 4. Feldspar-Diamond Street area in Pacific Beach. 5. Windansea, La Jolla. 6. La Jolla Shores. 7. Ocean side of Mission Beach opposite El Carmel and Santa Clara points.

Ford and Schlack, both members of the La Jolla Town Council, voiced full support of the new ordinance.

Local surfers, unhappy about being pigeonholed as hoodlums, organized. On Saturday, April 8, 1961, freshly groomed and donning ties, young surfers gathered downtown to protect both their good name and their access rights. Bearing signs that read “Save Surfing” and “Surfers Also Have Rights,” the surfers marched from the San Diego Civic Center to Horton Plaza at Fourth and Broadway. The Evening Tribune sent a photographer and a reporter, but they provided little coverage of the march. A single image of the protest appeared on page A-21 the following Monday. These events, combined with a lack of voice, caused local surfers to embark on a mission of self-advocacy over the course of
Amid much controversy, the measure went before the city council on April 11, 1961. In an hour-long hearing in front of a packed city council chamber, both Ford and Schlack reiterated their previous endorsement of the ordinance. Several teenagers also spoke, opposing the ordinances and asking for designation of more surfing areas. Ron Church, a Scripps Institute of Oceanography diver and underwater/surf photographer, gave the council petitions signed by 875 persons opposing the ordinance. He said, “when a drunk is driving down the street, you don’t close the street to all drivers. You arrest the drunk. Why pick on all surfers for the actions of a few?”

As a result of the heavy pushback from surfers, the city council promised to delay the ordinance so that further consideration could be made. Local politicians, meanwhile, capitalized on the situation by appearing to be sympathetic to the surf community. Kerrigan was reported saying, “the city should acquire access rights to protect the beach for surfing.” Tharp said, “The people who use the beaches are entitled to thoughtful planning and preservation.”

The city council considered relegating surfers to specific areas, even building a Surf Park. The problem was that they focused on an area, Tourmaline Canyon, that had unsurfable waves. Not all residents or surfers felt that creation and implementation of “parking... supervision, and other facilities” were great ways to preserve Tourmaline Canyon.

On April 21, 1961, in what would be a precursor to the San Diego Interclub Surfing Council, Ron Church chaired a meeting of seventy-five surfers representing twelve different clubs. The group discussed the “antisurfing” ordinance that was up before the city council and planned to ask the city council “to reword the ordinance so areas not designated for swimming [could] be used for surfing.” The group also discussed the need for surfers and clubs to self-police in order to “eliminate rowdyism and littering.” Surfers left the meeting with pledges of
support from the beach area’s chamber of commerce and Ford who represented the La Jolla Town Council.

On April 25, 1961, the controversial surfing ordinance went up in front of the city council again. More than 100 surfers showed up at the hearing, occupying all of the seats in the council chamber and standing along the walls. According to one reporter, “The surf board riders were neatly dressed and restrained in conduct.” Andy Jones, one of three spokesmen, presented a substitute ordinance that closed access to La Jolla’s Archer Street beach area via Linda Way and Archer Street in the Sun Gold Point Subdivision, but otherwise left things as they were. The beach itself would not be closed. This substitute ordinance was backed by petitions containing 3,513 signatures. Surfers promised to police themselves and keep away from Sun Gold Point subdivision. The city council, once again, opted to postpone final action on the restrictive ordinance. Shortly afterwards, the city barricaded access via Sun Gold Point and organized another study committee to be chaired by Ford.49

In late July, a new surfing ordinance, No. 8502, was introduced to the city council. The new ordinance did not close any beaches to surfing, but gave city officials the power to do so “if surfers using it [were] deemed to be contributing

to a public nuisance.” At this meeting Ford presented the recommendations of the study committee: “1. The city continue its efforts to acquire Tourmaline Canyon” and “2. A public toilet and changing facility be built at La Jolla’s Windansea Beach as a convenience to beach users.” The City would go on to develop Tourmaline Canyon. La Jolla residents, meanwhile, successfully opposed the construction of a bathroom and changing facility.

The city council passed Ordinance No. 8502 on August 1, 1961. At the end of the month, the body adopted a resolution establishing some authorized surfing areas, but they did not repeat their attempt to restrict surfing to designated beaches. That idea, according to The San Diego Union, “has been withdrawn after it stirred up a storm of protest.”

1962: The Purchase of Tourmaline Canyon

Over the next ten months, the City of San Diego continued with their misguided plans to create a Surf Park, focusing their attention on Tourmaline Canyon. Negotiations began with owner Carlos Tavares and his associate Robert Collins who hoped to rezone Electric Avenue (now La Jolla Hermosa Avenue) from R1 to R4. This caused an uproar as residents of single-family homes disliked the idea of an apartment complex coming into the neighborhood. Complaints and
petitions started to circulate regarding the park development. Residents thought that it would cost too much to develop and saw that Tavares and Collins would benefit the most, especially if they got the remaining land rezoned. In October 1962 the city council accepted a $161,000 plan to develop part of Tourmaline Canyon. This went against the wishes of at least 200 local residents who had signed a petition to turn the entire canyon into a park.

Among the many critics of the plan was Citizens Coordinate led by Thomas L. Crist. Citizens Coordinate urged the City Council to hold public hearings on the Tourmaline Surf Park proposal saying, “this whole project deserves a close reevaluation by the City and by the taxpayers.” The group alleged that the $50,000 price that Collins and Tavares were asking for the land was “entirely out of line with the current market.” The city was alleged to be willing to pay Collins an inflated price for the land, which he would then turn around and put back into the project for his own benefit. The money would go toward paying for the sewer pump, something necessary for apartment complexes.

A week after Crist proposed public hearings, the price of the land the city wanted to buy was dropped to $42,500 for 2.4 acres. In the end, San Diego City Manager Tom Fletcher negotiated the purchase of 3.4 acres for $45,000. After Collins added an additional acre for $2,500, Fletcher said, “I believe Collins bent over backwards to help us obtain the land we need.” That the development company would have done this without some return benefit added to community suspicion.

After another failed attempt to rezone part of the canyon in 1965, this time to R3 to build a hospital, Tavares and Collins eventually got the areas that they wanted to develop rezoned to R4. Between 1966 and 1970 four apartment complexes were built on Tourmaline Terrace: Casa Del Sur, Casa Del Norte, Casa Hermosa, and Casa Del Mar.

1963: A Surfing Park, Thor Svenson, and Windansea Surf Club

Citizens Coordinate proposed an entirely different development plan for the park. They proposed a “narrower service road following land contours along the western slope”; parking for only 50 cars; a bathroom on the upper level, and no sewer construction. They also recommended “retention of the present streambed by shoring up banks where needed and planting native shrubs to control erosion.” Aggravated that their own architectural plan was overlooked in favor of the Collins/ Tavares deal, Citizens Coordinate called the size of the parking lot excessive and argued that construction would require “severe cuts in the canyon wall.” They labeled the park plan “playa del black top” and claimed that the city:
1. Failed to use the service of professional park designers;
2. Bypassed citizens groups in reaching its decision for the [$160,000] park;
3. Failed to hold a public hearing on the proposal.65

When the San Diego City Council officially approved the park plan on February 28, 1963, Crist called for an investigation by the City council. Asked by Mayor Dail if he thought that there had been anything irregular that should be investigated by the grand jury, Crist stopped short, saying, “we don’t believe that is necessary.”66

At the same time, but for different reasons, surfers were circulating their own petition against the Tourmaline Surfing Park. Organized by 19-year-old Bill Caster, the petition collected 1,000 signatures in a two-day period. Caster told a reporter for the Evening Tribune that he planned to go to the city council with the petitions and that if the city council ignored them, “surfers [would] stage a mass protest.” Caster said, “We want an alternate site...The money the council plans to spend on Tourmaline Canyon will be wasted money because it won’t be used by surfers.”67 There was no wave there, an important point that seemed to escape local politicians.

Despite the objections of Citizens Coordinate and local surfers, the City moved
forward with the Tourmaline Canyon park. On April 4, 1963, the contract was awarded to A.A. Baxter Corp. of San Diego. Work on the development started soon after.

While the media was consumed with the bureaucratic details of the controversial land deal concerning Tourmaline Canyon, surfers worked to clean up their image. Seeing that their rights were being threatened, they began forming organized surfing clubs, including Windansea Surf Club. Established by Chuck Halsey in 1962, Windansea quickly became the most formidable and high profile club in San Diego. This was in large part due to the public relations work done by one Thor Svenson, aka William Alfred Rushward.

Svenson—a one-time San Diego school system and theater group teacher, theatrical arts and surf writer, opera and theater director, day camp leader, and radio host—appeared constantly in the San Diego media in the early 1960s. He played a large role in helping to legitimize surfing in San Diego in the early 1960s, but he was also a controversial figure accused of dark deeds. These accusations cast a shadow on Svenson’s motives for being involved with young surfers.

It is likely that Svenson was brought in during the Sun Gold Point conflict of 1961, but he did not get a stronghold in the mainstream media for surfing until 1963.73 Svenson worked with the city and made public statements to newspaper reporters when, in May 1963, the City of San Diego removed ‘Hot Curl,’ the over six-foot-tall, 400-pound concrete, steel-framed, mop-headed, trunks-wearing, beer-drinking Windansea statue created by Lee Teacher and Mike Dormer.74 When the statue was replaced on the beach in the middle of July 1963 and then destroyed by vandals on July 27, it was Svenson who was deferred to in order to determine whether ‘Hot Curl’ would be buried or rebuilt.75

Beginning with their win of the first Annual Malibu Invitational in 1963, Windansea quickly became the juggernaut of the club scene. The team took all five places in the individual competition. They also came in “first in the paddle board relay to win the tourney’s team and perpetual trophy.”76

Concurrently, the City of San Diego was pushing to complete the construction of the Tourmaline Surfing Park. In October 1963 the San Diego Union reported that the Tourmaline Canyon improvements had been delayed by vandals: “On at least four occasions youths had removed barricades from the parking area and raced cars on a fresh asphalt surface, tearing holes in it.”77 What was initially projected to be an 8-month project ended up taking much longer than expected. The parking lot was completed within weeks of these delays, but the completion and dedication of the park did not happen until 1965.

In the winter of 1963 Svenson became instrumental in helping the Windansea team fundraise and obtain an invitation to the world surfing championships at Makaha. He obtained the support of Duke Kahanamoku who “agreed to underwrite the expenses of one Windansea member to the championships and to entertain the team during its visit.”78 He also arranged for the media to be present at the airport for Windansea’s departure and return.79

The 1963 International Surfing Championships at Makaha turned into one of the most notable years on record for the event. Windansea surfers Phil Edwards, Butch Van Artsdalen, Mike Burner, Gary Cooke, Joey Cabell, and Rusty Miller all
qualified for the semifinals, with Cabell and Miller advancing to the finals. In 12 to 15 foot surf, twenty-five year-old Joey Cabell edged out defending champ Midget Farrelly to take the win. Windansea also “took four first places out of seven events held off Waikiki...in the surfboard paddle race section of the International Surfing championships.” Four of the twelve women’s finalists were also Windansea club members including Joyce Hoffman and 1959 Makaha winner Linda Benson, but all four failed to place. The contest was broadcast on NBC’s Wide World of Sports and the team got considerable positive coverage in *The San Diego Union.* When seventy-five Windansea surfers left for Hawaii two years later, their farewell dinner was attended by several local politicians including the mayor. With them, Windansea carried keys to the City of San Diego and a letter of introduction from Governor of California Edmund Gerald “Pat” Brown.

**1964-65: The Western Regional Surfing Championships**

Windansea and Svenson stepped up their public relations campaign to improve surfing’s image. In 1964, the San Diego Interclub Council on Surfing was formed in order to organize surf contests and engage in community outreach. Toward the end of that summer the group went door to door, taking surveys and asking for suggestions about how to improve their public image. Learning that most homeowners were concerned about litter, they organized an “End of Vacation Clean-Up program” in Pacific Beach, Mission Beach, Ocean Beach, and Imperial Beach. William White, chairman of the War Against Litter Committee, commended “the surfers’ clubs of San Diego and also recognize their council chairman, Thor Svenson, for this type of leadership training and public service.”

Toward the end of the 1964, Windansea sent a team of forty-seven to the Makaha event to defend its team title. Joyce Hoffman won the Women’s title, and Fred Hemmings Jr. took home the Men’s Junior title.

The surfing ordinance controversy of 1961 was said to have helped bring the prestigious 1966 U.S. Surfing Association championships to San Diego. Lew Scarr, columnist for The San Diego Union wrote, “City Aquatics Superintendent Don Vynne fought (and that’s the right word) for separate surfing areas and now, five years later, he has them and with them San Diego has the Surfing Olympics.” The contest was held in the fall of 1966 at La Jolla Shores and South Mission Beach, with the final event next to the newly erected pier at Ocean Beach.
In February 1965, with the recommendation of the Pacific Beach Town Council, the San Diego City Council officially approved the use of the Tourmaline Canyon Development as a City Park.90 Not long afterwards, Svenson’s public relations work culminated in a full page of articles published in The San Diego Union with the main headline reading “Area Surfers Working to Improve Their Image.”91 One article announced an upcoming surfing clinic to be hosted by Windansea while another covered local girls interested in signing up for surf teams through La Jolla Youth, Inc.92 An article entitled, “Going to Try Surfing? Club Members Give Tips,” quoted one Windansea club member as saying, “Surfers right now are trying to improve their appearance on land. It used to be that they would wear grubby old army jackets. Now they have gotten to be more clothes-conscious. They have their own style, with stripes and bands, and regular good clothes.”93 Another club member said, “The beach is not the place to turn on your bad conduct.”94 For his part, Svenson spoke of the clean-up efforts, the San Diego Interclub Surf Council, self-policing, and how lighter boards—beginning with those designed by Bob Simmons—had helped make surfing more accessible to a large number of Californians, igniting the surfing boom of the early 1960s.95

The public relations campaign seemed to work. In May 1965, San Diego Union sports editor Jack Murphy titled a column, “Surfer Bleached Bum? The Stereotype Seems Dated.” He wrote:
A surfer, by popular definition, had long, bleached hair, the physique of a lifeguard, and the manner of a juvenile delinquent. He violates property rights, litters beaches, drinks excessively, smokes pot, stages wild parties, surrounds himself with adoring beach bunnies, and earnestly avoids work in all forms.96

Murphy used the examples of Ricky Grigg, a PhD candidate at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, and Windansea club president Rusty Miller, history major at San Diego State University, to show that this was an unfair generalization. Murphy wrote, “Perhaps Grigg and Miller aren’t exactly typical of competitive surfers, but they are more representative of the sport than the symbolic ruffian whose identity as shaped by police blotters, distorted movies, and newspaper headlines.” He also quoted Vynne, saying, “There’s been a dramatic change—the behavior of surfers is 100 percent improved over what it was three years ago. Even two years ago we had chaotic conditions.”97 Both Vynne and the surfers credited Svenson with sparking the reform.
Tourmaline Surfing Park was the first of its kind in the United States. The formal dedication took place at 10 o’clock in the morning on May 29, 1965, in conjunction with the ninth annual Pacific Beach Aquafair and the Western Regional Surfing Championships. Barry Adams, a sixteen-year-old Clairemont High School sophomore, was slated to accept the canyon on behalf of surfers. On May 28, The San Diego Union printed an article titled “Dedication of Park to Feature Surfer.” There was to be an offbeat parade of surfers, led by a fire engine, from Ocean Front Walk to the head of Tourmaline Canyon and then down to the surf. It included champions from the Windansea Surf Club as well as a pep band directed by surfer Rusty Miller.

On Saturday May 29, 1965, over 350 surfers showed up at the foot of Emerald Street, north of Crystal Pier and south of Tourmaline Canyon to compete in the Western Regional Surfing Championships. The contest could not run at the new Tourmaline Surfing Park because, at that time, there was no wave there during the summer months. Even during the winter, the wave surfed was not Tourmaline proper, but PB Point. In front of some 5,000 spectators and in moderate surf with “erratic five-foot waves,” the field was trimmed down to 120 finalists for the closing day.

At 10 a.m. the same day, young Barry Adams, Point Surf Southern Surf Club and San Diego Interclub Surf Council member and representative, paddled up to Tourmaline from the contest site. Waiting for him at the dedication site were Mayor Frank Curran; William Taggart, president of the sponsoring Pacific Beach Town Council; Miss Pacific Beach and Aquafair chairman, Andree La Pointe; and San Diego city officials. Adams accepted the newly dedicated canyon for surfers and the city council proclaimed the last week in May to be surfing week in San Diego, a proclamation that was made again during the World Championships in 1966.

The following day, the finals of the Western Regional Surfing Championships were held in improved conditions and in front of a media estimated 15,000. Rich Chew of Long Beach took the title edging out Rusty Miller, Donald Takayama, and Skip Frye. Joey Hamasaki, Windansea club member, took the women’s open title upsetting Joyce Hoffman who came in second. Mike Doyle and Pauline Luton won the tandem competition while Margo Godfrey (Oberg) won the San Diego County resident women’s title. Windansea won both the team title in the open classification and the paddleboard races. George Rotgans took the individual paddleboard race title and “then [furnished] a strong second leg to pace a Windansea quintet in the relay.” The same group of dignitaries, plus Svenson, was on hand to present trophies to the contest winners at the contest site.

The events between 1960 and 1965, relating to the Tourmaline Canyon development, did much to help legitimize surfing in the eyes of the San Diego
public. Thanks to the work of local surfers and their public relations advocate Svenson, the San Diego press had begun to portray surfers as respectable athletes. As Lew Scarr later wrote, “If you look at Dec. 17 [1960], by itself it may appear to have been the bleakest day in all of surfing history for San Diego. But if you give it the long view, Dec. 17 [1960], shines as the very brightest.”

These efforts did not end the dissatisfaction of the Sun Gold Point residents. No one was using the Tourmaline parking lot because the wave was not there. Instead, surfers continued to access the beach at Archer Street and Linda Way. Discouraging signs put up by Schlack did not help. Conflict between residents and surfers erupted again in October 1967. The Evening Tribune assigned a photographer to go down to Archer Street to take pictures; a reporter also went down on three separate occasions. In the ensuing article, City Manager Walter Hahn said, “One of the most important assets a city has is its access to beaches…If we close Linda Way, people all over the city are going to ask us to close access near their homes.” Schlack, for his part, said, “I am about ready to give up.” In January 1968, the issue was raised again at a meeting of the La Jolla Town Council. Ford was quoted saying that the access point was “a source of lawlessness, a public indecency, and a flagrant violations of property and person rights.”

Tourmaline Canyon Surfing Park Today

Years later, the City of San Diego made use of the sand dredged from the San Diego River, depositing it up the coast. The rocks in the cove at Tourmaline began to fill in. Reinforced in the early 1980s with the help of several large El Niño storm systems, the sand seemed to take hold more permanently and helped form a wave
Tourmaline Canyon: Surfers vs. Homeowners

that began to attract scores of surfers to the Tourmaline Surfing Park. What began as something that surfers fought against had turned into a positive. Tourmaline today is a place where surfing, for many San Diegans, begins and ends.

Today, surfers are the caretakers of Tourmaline. The Tourmaline Tailgaters Surfing Association, led by Pacific Beach Surf Club member Greg Miller, has on several occasions organized to work with the City of San Diego and the California Coastal Commission to make additional improvements to the park. These improvements include a mural on the bathroom wall, a 911 call box, and a kiosk where surf and club information as well as lost car keys are hung. There is also a memorial that pays respect to some of the other legendary surfers of the area, including: Larry Gordon, Floyd Smith, Bobby “Challenger” Thomas, Mike Hynson, Skip Frye, William “Hadji” Hein, Emil Sigler, Doc Paskowitz, Woody Brown, Don Okey, Skeeter Malcolm, Norm Polonski, Ralph Dawson, Doc Blankenship, Bo Smith, “Captain” Dan O’Connell, Bud Caldwell, Billie “Goldie” Goldsmith, Ralph Barber, Joe Gann, Robert “Black Mac” McClendon, Holly “Papa Smurf” Jones, Ron St. John, Kanakas Surf Club, Windansea Surf Club, Pacific Beach Surf Club, and the Tourmaline Tailgaters Surfing Association. Additionally, in progress is an effort to construct a new bench for Skeeter while adding an additional bench honoring Larry Gordon (Gordon & Smith).

For surfers, aside from access rights, beach access is now often additionally
complicated and dictated by the number of people in the water, the location of the wave, and how good it breaks. Since the 1960s, many, but not all, surf communities have begrudgingly accepted the growing number of surfers. Many things, including lighter boards, population growth, leashes, wetsuits, soft-tops, and reductions in localism have all played a role in San Diego’s increasingly crowded line-ups. Coastal access is not, however, an issue isolated to surfers. The number of individual stakeholders that annually visit beaches around the globe is indefinable. The issue is so complex that not even all members within a given stakeholder group are in agreement. There are those who want to maintain private property; those who want parking lots, bathrooms, and stairs; and those who want parks or full restoration. What remains clear is that these are not issues easily resolved.

NOTES
6. “Study is Ordered on Use of Beaches,” The San Diego Union, March 17, 1961; “Part of Street Name Changed in La Jolla,” The San Diego Union, July 10, 1975.
7. “Surf Riders Stir Waves of Protests,” Evening Tribune, December 27, 1960. Schlack lived at 341 Archer St. (now Sea Ridge Drive) in La Jolla. He was a veteran of World War II and the Korean War and onetime head of the Dental Technicians’ School at the National Training Center. “Capt. Schlack Services Set Here Today,” The San Diego Union, July 8, 1970. Some of the early surfers recall Schlack as an angry man who use to take pictures of them and spray them with his hose.
9. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
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26. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
43. “Council Postpones Decision on Surfboard Ordinance,” *The San Diego Union*, April 12, 1961. Statements were also made by surfers Floyd Smith (of Gordon & Smith), Andy Jones, and Dave Anderson.
47. “Study is Ordered on Use of Beaches,” The San Diego Union, March 17, 1961.
51. “Windansea Rest Room Delay Voted,” The San Diego Union, July 18, 1962; “La Jolla Residents Fight Rest Room,” The San Diego Union, October 30, 1959. La Jolla residents had also blocked the construction of a bathroom in 1959.
60. “Canyon Site Price Reduced for City,” The San Diego Union, December 20, 1962.
62. Ibid.
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84. “Panel to Discuss Surfers' Image,” The San Diego Union, February 29, 1964; “Surfing Symposium
94. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
105. J. McCain, “Beach Right of Way for Surfers Argues,” Evening Tribune, November 23, 1967. After a local surfer, who also happened to be a dentist, fought charges in court in 1964 after ignoring the signs, Schlack was ordered by the city attorney to take them down; “Surfers, Their Cars, and Trash,” Evening Tribune, October 18, 1967.
Why The Y?: The Origin of San Diego YWCA’s Clay Avenue Branch for African Americans

By Charla Wilson

Since the late nineteenth century, many African Americans have migrated to San Diego from the North, South, and Midwest with the hope of finding better living conditions and employment prospects. Although there was an absence of de jure segregation in San Diego, or segregation upheld by local laws, African Americans still encountered institutional racism and restricted opportunities. Examples include prohibiting African Americans admission to public places such as restaurants and theatres, as well as refusing to employ them on the basis of race. Records show that since the late nineteenth century, African Americans in San Diego, including Rebecca Craft and Exie Lee Hampton, fought against these discriminatory practices.

African Americans have advocated for civil rights through local churches and organizations, including the San Diego Clay Avenue Branch Girl Reserves on the property of Mrs. Pryor and Nellie Coons, Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University.

Charla Wilson received her Master of Arts in history from California State University San Marcos. This essay was inspired by her graduate thesis, For Refuge and Strength: The San Diego Young Women’s Christian Association Branch for African Americans from 1925 to 1951. Charla Wilson would like to thank her thesis advisors, Dr. Jill Watts, Dr. Jeffrey Charles, Dr. Katherine Hijar, and Dr. Alyssa Sepinwall for their guidance.
Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). Between the 1920s and 1950s, black women took it upon themselves to establish the only community center that provided housing, employment opportunities, and recreational resources for African American women in San Diego in the early twentieth century. They ran the day-to-day activities at the YWCA’s Clay Avenue Branch for African American girls in the neighborhood of Logan Heights. The Clay Avenue Branch sustained an essential social services program for a small and underserved population, and a platform from which black female activists organized and challenged racism in a broader San Diego.¹

**Collective Activism to Combat Racial Discrimination**

By 1920, a growing black middle class had settled in San Diego—the result of the Great Migration and World War I. This led to the introduction of restrictive housing covenants. While African Americans had been living throughout San Diego County, the imposition of restrictive housing covenants impacted settlement patterns, and ultimately limited where blacks could live. African Americans noticeably settled in two concentrated areas: a one-block area of La Jolla, mainly “the quarters” for African American domestic employees; and Logan Heights, east of downtown. African Americans combated racial restrictions such as this by forging social networks and turning to collective organizing. The central organization from which African Americans operated was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The San Diego NAACP made successful attempts at disrupting the existence of local discriminatory policies; it convinced stores, theaters, and restaurant owners to remove signs that barred African American access, permitted African Americans to be admitted into the San Diego County Hospital nurses’ training program, and compelled the Children’s Welfare Home to accept black homeless and abandoned youth.²

In addition to dismantling discriminatory policies, black and white women of the San Diego NAACP took special interest in advocating for the creation of youth recreational outlets. The idea of recreation was a product of the Progressive Era after the turn of the twentieth century. Settlement activist Jane Addams claimed that recreation was essential for protecting youth from the dangers of unsupervised play and the illicit lures of city streets. The women were concerned that San Diego did not have a recreational facility for African American youth, as existing youth centers served whites only. Charlotte Stearns, a white woman, was a self-appointed Publicist and Social Coordinator for San Diego’s NAACP. She was also elected to serve as Chair of the Juvenile Court and Probation Committee of the Federated Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and as a Playgrounds Commissioner.
In 1920, Stearns approached both the national and local San Diego Chapters of the YWCA and YMCA about the possibility of extending programming to African American youth. The “Ys,” also products of the Progressive Movement, served as important safety nets for African Americans throughout the United States. They were one of the few organizations to encourage interdenominational membership and to extend services to African Americans.³

It is uncertain what transpired among Stearns, the NAACP Youth Auxiliary, and the YMCA; Stearns and the NAACP turned to the YWCA to provide African American girls with recreational activities in San Diego. In 1920, Cordella Winn, the African American Secretary of Colored Work for the National Board of the YWCA, responded to Stearns’ request by surveying the San Diego area for potential YWCA programming for African American women and girls. Winn decided, however, that San Diego was not an appropriate location for an African American branch because of leadership and population concerns. In particular, she asserted that potential black leaders of a YWCA branch in San Diego had “no conception of all that is involved in such a step.” Furthermore, she determined that San Diego’s black population of 1,200 did not meet the YWCA’s minimum population requirement of 15,000. Winn suggested that African American leaders start a Girl Reserves group, a popular YWCA club for ten to eighteen-year-old girls. This option did not offer African Americans the same benefits as an official branch, including an exclusive meeting facility. To remedy the lack of a place to meet, the wife of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) pastor B.R. Guy organized the Girl Reserves group in the early 1920s with meetings held in the church’s social hall. The Girl Reserves group lasted only a year, disbanding when the Guys moved to Los Angeles. Additionally, some of the other leaders of the Girl Reserves left the San Diego area as well, leaving no one to continue the program.⁴
After the Girl Reserves dissolved, women in the San Diego NAACP continued to seek avenues to secure a recreational space for African American boys and girls. A few resources became available to African Americans by 1923. The Neighborhood House, a settlement house, was established in Logan Heights by the College Woman’s Club with about twenty percent African American patrons. While the Neighborhood House set aside a few days per week for African Americans to use the club rooms, black women were displeased that their meeting schedule was dictated by the staff. Another drawback of the Neighborhood House was that the African American population was not a target group. One of the main goals of the Woman’s Club was to understand its Mexican neighbors following increased immigration resulting from the Mexican Revolution.

Additionally, Logan Heights gained a few recreational outlets as a result of San Diego City Commissioner Charlotte Stearns’ push for after school activities for African American youth. Memorial Junior High School, located in Logan Heights, was the site for community theatre, dance, and athletics during the summer months. The City of San Diego also converted vacant Logan Heights lots into playgrounds and developed “community leisure time centers” for adults and youth in partnership with the local schools to “continue the work of education.” In addition to these community resources, some members of the San Diego NAACP, including Martha Dodge and Rebecca Craft, organized the Young People’s Community Center for black youth. The facility located on 2936 Imperial Avenue was intended to serve as a social and civic center for art expos, entertainment, and guest speakers. 5

Although African Americans were successful in acquiring recreational outlets for black youth, the community leaders’ goals broadened to build a community center that served multiple purposes. These women recognized that African Americans in San Diego lacked basic community resources, including social services, reliable meeting places, temporary housing, employment, and networking opportunities. More importantly, a community center served as more than a building; it was a space to gain autonomy within a city that ignored and overlooked its black population. Securing a community space empowered black women to determine the use and purpose of that space within the boundaries of a residentially segregated community— in this case, to mobilize and battle local discrimination, educate black youth in race pride, and establish community roots in San Diego.

In 1923, Martha Dodge, a representative of the San Diego NAACP Youth Auxiliary and wife of Charles H. Dodge, the president of the San Diego NAACP from 1922 to 1923, declared that a goal of the auxiliary was to develop plans to
Why The Y?

purchase land and build a community center exclusively for African American youth. In January 1924, the National NAACP Board of Directors reprimanded the San Diego NAACP for what they argued was a move toward segregation and a departure from the core integrationist values of the national organization. Since the San Diego Youth Auxiliary’s plan was unsuccessful, it is possible that some members of the San Diego NAACP turned again to the YWCA as an alternative solution for establishing a community center for African American girls in San Diego.6

Even though nationwide the YWCA practiced racial separatism and had a history of limiting black participation, the African American women of San Diego recognized that affiliating with the organization had benefits. Some of the immediate resources that the YWCA offered African American women included a physical space to promote educational, recreational, and social programs, a paid Executive Secretary, and opportunities to attend YWCA conferences for leadership training. The San Diego YWCA also received funding, primarily from the Community Chest, an agency that raised money from businesses and philanthropists for local organizations. African Americans would not have access to this funding without its partnership with the YWCA. Also, the woman's organization gave black women opportunities to step into leadership roles, offering them autonomy within a female space. This was beneficial because they were often excluded from these roles in black organizations dominated by male leaders. This allowed women to expand their social and professional networks. The YWCA also offered African Americans a different venue and context from church and school to educate black youth, especially girls. African American women pursued a partnership with the San Diego YWCA because it was a method to achieve full civil rights. If African American women decided to reject the YWCA because of its separatist policies, they would lose access to valuable community resources.7

In July 1925, women from the San Diego NAACP returned to the YWCA inquiring about the process of developing a branch for African Americans in San Diego. Margaret O’Connell, Executive Director of the San Diego Chapter of the YWCA, corresponded with Eva Del Vakea Bowles, Executive for Colored Work on the National Board of the YWCA, regarding African American women’s request to establish a branch in San Diego. Although the San Diego YWCA leadership mediated on behalf of the African American women’s requests, overall they were hesitant about getting involved in and supporting an African American branch. O’Connell noted the impracticality and costly endeavor of establishing a branch to serve African Americans in two distant neighborhoods, La Jolla and Logan Heights.

Moreover, O’Connell added that the San Diego Chapter of the YWCA had
other pending affairs. The association’s priority was to complete the $325,000 “Casa Amiga,” a new, five-story YWCA structure on a 100 by 150 square-foot lot in downtown San Diego. Likewise, Eva Bowles faced internal pressures from the National YWCA to approve of African American branches that had the “strongest chance” of becoming “model associations.” Since the Girl Reserves had been short-lived and the black population was small, San Diego was considered an “unwise expansion.” With affairs seemingly at a standstill, in September 1925, Ornie O. Branford, chairperson of an organization based in Logan Heights, possibly the NAACP, pressured O’Connell for a definitive response to the request for a YWCA for blacks in San Diego. O’Connell deferred to Bowles. Although Bowles did not approve of an African American branch in San Diego, she did assure Branford that the San Diego YWCA would work with the black women to establish another Girl Reserves. She also noted that there was a possibility of developing a branch in the future. The African American women decided to organize the Girl Reserves under the control of the San Diego Chapter of the YWCA. The leaders of the San Diego NAACP viewed the Girl Reserves as a stepping-stone to achieving YWCA branch status. African Americans could use the Girl Reserves program to gain greater access to a physical space and to create a platform for black female activism in San Diego.

African American Leaders of Clay Avenue YWCA

The Clay Avenue Board, 1932, Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University.
The majority of the black leaders of the San Diego YWCA were middle class, educated, and trained professionals, notably educators. They shared in the middle-class goal of expanding women’s roles beyond the domestic sphere to provide black communities with self-help resources directed toward “racial progress.” Most of the leaders were also members of the San Diego NAACP and Bethel Baptist Church. Some of the principal organizers of the African American Girl Reserves included: Exie Lee Hampton, Rebecca Craft, Elethia Kinzy, Cordelia Tate, Alvessie Hackshaw, Alice Childress, Marcia Smith, and Octavia Payne with support from white leaders from the San Diego Chapter of the YWCA including branch advisor Lottie Porterfield and San Diego YWCA President Josephine Seaman.

In 1929, Rebecca Craft, former teacher and the first female president of the San Diego NAACP, set the tone for the women’s mission within the YWCA Girl Reserves. In her NAACP inaugural address Craft insisted that women focus on mentoring and educating black youth in San Diego and recommended that they “study Negro history, Negro music, the great men and women of our race, etc.” African American women’s commitment to the Girl Reserves and other youth programming was an extension of the broader work of combating racial discrimination in San Diego and igniting black female activism.  

While the YWCA approved of an African American Girl Reserves, they did not initially offer African Americans a place to meet, not even at the Central YWCA located in downtown San Diego. At first, Girl Reserves meetings were held in non-YWCA facilities, including Bethel Baptist Church and the Young People’s Community Center both located in Logan Heights. In September 1932,
the white YWCA leadership leased property on 2905 Clay Avenue in Logan Heights and designated it a YWCA facility for the African American Girl Reserves. The facility was on a 75 by 140 foot corner lot, with a cottage toward the back of the main building. The facility was located across the street from Bethel Baptist Church. Due to its location, the program was renamed the Clay Street Girl Reserves. Logan Heights was the ideal location for the community center because the neighborhood had one of the largest concentrations of African Americans in San Diego. In fact, many of the members and leaders of the Clay Street Girl Reserves lived in Logan Heights.9

Although the placement of the facility was conveniently located, it allowed the white leaders of the YWCA to keep African Americans within the limits of Logan Heights. Thus, it reduced the prospect of blacks accessing the Central YWCA located downtown, which was located approximately two miles from the Clay Street facility. African Americans were confined to their neighborhoods, near their churches, schools, and homes, which maintained the YWCA’s racial segregation. There were inequitable differences between the Clay Street Girl Reserves facility and the Central San Diego YWCA “Casa Amiga” building amenities. For example, “Casa Amiga” had five stories, of which the top three were residence quarters. There were approximately seventy-five bedrooms, each equipped with running water, a telephone, bedding, curtains, heating and a few with patio terraces. The first floor had a lobby, information desk, shared library and living room, employment bureau, an auditorium that seated 250 people, a conference room, four offices, and a swimming pool. The second floor was devoted to five clubrooms. While the San Diego YWCA stated that any girl or woman could become a member of the association, giving them access to all YWCA activities, African Americans were not permitted to use the downtown gym, swimming pool, or residence. Although the Central YWCA served a larger membership body, African Americans at Clay Street Girl Reserves did not have the same accommodations in Logan Heights.10
The black women did not contest the physically separate facilities and instead attempted to make it an advantage. By having a black and female community center in Logan Heights, they gained autonomy over the space. On the one hand, the type of work they did in the YWCA community center was inwardly focused; the community work and activism that the black women envisioned took place within Logan Heights. On the other hand, their work in the NAACP was outwardly focused, as they actively pushed against the constraints of discrimination to achieve citizenship rights. The black women used the YWCA to concentrate on addressing immediate issues plaguing African Americans within the boundaries of Logan Heights.11

The Clay Street Girl Reserves quickly achieved a growing membership. In November 1932 the Clay Street Girl Reserves was acknowledged for the first time at a YWCA Board meeting by San Diego YWCA President Virginia Esterly. She reported that the Clay Street Girl Reserves, which she described as “developed from practically nothing,” had about seventy members. By January 1933, the Clay Street Girl Reserves had the third largest membership in the city, rivaled only by the Girl Reserves at San Diego High School and Hoover High School. Accordingly, the Clay Street leadership soon expanded YWCA programing, prompting them to change the Clay Street Girl Reserves to Clay Street Clubs. The women offered an array of activities including sewing, dancing, and gym classes, and sponsored
The black women had limited privileges within the San Diego YWCA. Exie Lee Hampton, for example, was invited to attend monthly Board meetings. Outside of being physically present and reporting on the activities at the Clay Street Clubs facility, she had no other voice. Hampton did not participate or offer commentary on the activities and decisions made by the San Diego Chapter as a whole, nor did she have voting power. She was not even an official member of the Board. Not only were African Americans physically detached from the daily events at the Central YWCA, but they were also excluded from fully participating within the local association. Black and white members were offered only a few opportunities
to hold joint events. In 1933, YWCA President Esterly mentioned that Clay Street Clubs “continue[d] to have their own activities and set on an invitation basis so far as mingling of the groups is concerned.” One of these invitation-based activities included black and white girls attending the Asilomar Girl Reserves camp. Although this camp offered both black and white girls some interaction, the YWCA remained an association that did not embrace racial equality. They refused to develop relationships with the black leaders because they did not consider them as equals.14

In 1934, Rebecca Craft, along with five other women from the Clay Street Clubs, formed the Women’s Civic League, which functioned initially as a fundraising committee to subsidize the Clay Street Clubs. The League, also located on Clay Avenue, sponsored community talks and requested “a silver offering” to benefit the Girl Reserves. The Women’s Civic League later expanded to a membership of 200 people. The mission of the organization was, “to work out internal problems through constructive programs, and to act concertedly and intelligently upon facts.” The women pursued critical community issues and laws “to study science of government in an effort to overcome some of the cloudy viewpoints as they affect us [African Americans] in civic affairs.” This included pressuring city
officials to install traffic signals and streetlights in Logan Heights, organizing community cleanup campaigns, providing college scholarships, and supporting the campaign to hire Jasper Davis to the San Diego police force, to become the first African American police officer in San Diego.\textsuperscript{15}

The African American women of the YWCA continued to seek additional resources beyond acquiring the Clay Street Clubs facility for black girls. They built upon this goal by identifying housing and employment solutions for African Americans in Logan Heights. As early as April 1935, the Clay Street leaders moved forward with plans to expand beyond the Girl Reserves and their additional YWCA programming, to pursue their original goal of being recognized as “a regular YWCA branch.” Not only would the African American group be fully incorporated into the Y Movement, they would gain the added benefit of having a salaried Executive Director, the opportunity to attend conferences, and the chance to advance their networks. In 1936, Clay Street Clubs’ leadership and the San Diego Board invited Cordella Winn, the National Secretary for Colored Work of the YWCA National Board, to visit San Diego to help start the process of transforming Clay into an official branch.\textsuperscript{16}

**Pursuing YWCA Branch Status**

From February 25 to 28, 1936, the leaders of Clay Street Clubs met with Cordella Winn to review the requirements for converting Clay Street Clubs into a branch. Even though Winn opposed branch status in 1920, she was now willing to review San Diego’s progress. Since 1920, Clay Street Clubs’ membership had grown to at least one hundred, and the leadership had stabilized. If granted branch status, San Diego would join Los Angeles, Oakland, and Portland as the only African American YWCA branches on the West Coast.\textsuperscript{17}

After Winn’s visit, the women of Clay Street Clubs began the process of working with the leaders of the San Diego YWCA to complete the necessary paperwork to transition to branch status. Although they had not yet established an official branch, the women voted on representatives for the Clay Street Clubs Committee of Management. Exie Lee Hampton was elected as Executive Secretary, Alice Childress as Chair of Committee Management, E.W. Anderson as Chair of Finance, Lottie Porterfield as liaison to the Board of Directors, and two additional white women from the San Diego YWCA Board. The women also began the process of writing a constitution. The Committee of Management developed a fully structured program of activities, with the addition of an office and housing facilities. The activities included a department for young girls to participate in the Girl Reserves, conferences, summer camp, glee club, choir, and dance. They
also had a Girls and Women at Work Department, which included the Industrial Club and which supported employed women and college students with housing, job placement, and recreation. While Clay Street leaders were eager to make the transition to branch status within a year or two following Winn’s visit, it took four years to become an official branch. The process was likely prolonged due to decreased leadership support and finances because of the Great Depression. The black and white leaders collaborated more on Clay Street Clubs activities following Winn’s visit. Two months after Winn’s visit, the committee met to discuss potential employment opportunities for African Americans in response to the Great Depression. According to a YWCA assessment, it was “practically impossible to get domestic employment” in San Diego, a common job for African American women. This was a serious issue because black women were excluded from other work. The Committee of Management considered accepting the National Youth Administration’s (NYA) Library Project at Clay Street Clubs. The NYA was a New Deal agency of the Works Projects Administration (WPA), a government-funded program implemented nationwide to aid local governments facing decreasing revenues as a result of the Great Depression. It also was designed to train and put unemployed Americans back to work. The YWCA committee agreed to participate in the program. Edith D. Sawyer, a member of the National Board who was in San Diego conducting an evaluation of Clay Street on behalf of the San Diego YWCA,

YWCA girls club: the Pirateers. ©SDHC #NB 000370. Photo by Norman Baynard.
noted the respectful and productive exchange of conversation during the meeting:

I have rarely seen such a good illustration of actual group work process as occurred in this meeting. There was literally no pressure but the group moved through discussion from almost united opposition to the project to actual discussion to cooperate with it. Real thinking went on throughout the discussion. The white members participated but not more than anyone else.

The black and white women demonstrated potential to work interracially and collaboratively. Still, the conversation was in the context of developing separate solutions for African Americans; this was not a collaborative effort to support all women in the local association. Four months later, fifty women at Clay Street Clubs were employed through the WPA. Although the WPA project reinforced segregation in the San Diego YWCA, it served as another way for African American women to expand upon the resources that the YWCA offered. At the time, the only employed person at Clay Street Clubs was Executive Director Exie Lee Hampton. Committee leaders were volunteers. The library project was a significant means for extending YWCA services beyond youth to aid African American women seeking employment during the worst economic crisis in United States history.¹⁹

In 1938, San Diego YWCA Board members and Clay Avenue leaders faced a challenge when President Brockett announced that the owners who had leased the Clay Street Clubs property were demanding a 100 percent increase in rent. Representatives of the Finance Committee advised the general board to purchase the property. The board took out a loan for $2,000 from the San Diego Trust and Savings Bank. Former President Josephine Seaman supplemented the bank loan with a personal $1200 loan. Likewise, the Secretary Carrie F. Ink loaned $3,500 to help meet the remaining balance, and Porterfield donated $100 for the mortgage. By May 2, 1938, the San Diego YWCA became the owners of Clay Street Clubs property, ensuring the continued presence of an African American community center in Logan Heights.²⁰

With a permanent community center confirmed, Clay Street leaders turned their attention again to applying for YWCA branch status. Although Clay Street leadership introduced the Committee of Management and gained a facility, they had not yet formally applied to become a branch of the YWCA. On March 21, 1940, Porterfield gave a presentation before the board about “race relationships as these affect the San Diego YWCA and the Clay Street Center.” In this presentation, Porterfield asserted that the Central YWCA should emulate the New York City YWCA’s example of interracial cooperation. In February 1940, Porterfield visited
the 139th Street Branch for African American women in New York to observe black and white leadership following their adoption of YWCA’s experimental “center” model. The National Board was in the process of restructuring the definition of a YWCA branch as they moved toward the goal of integrating local associations. The concept of a center was to decentralize a city’s main YWCA by dispersing smaller YWCA facilities, or centers, throughout the city. Members would have privileges at all YWCA facilities within the city. While the New York association was not integrated, it had black representation on its board, encouraged the membership of immigrants, and had expanded their services, including a larger facility for clubrooms, a residence, and trade school. The center for African Americans was located adjacent to the main New York YWCA building, which placed black and white leaders and members in closer proximity. Porterfield’s impression was that the association had “the complete cooperation of the Central YWCA of New York with the Negro leaders.”

After Porterfield’s presentation on New York City’s new YWCA model, the board responded with a lengthy discussion of which Katherine Halsey described: “the matter of branch and race relations rather came to a head.” As a supporter of racial equality and integration, Porterfield likely pressured the board to consider a greater commitment to interracial cooperation, including integrating the San Diego association. Some white leaders were likely offended by Porterfield’s critique of “race relations” at the San Diego YWCA because they believed they had cooperatively supported Clay Street Clubs financially and administratively. White leaders welcomed black participation in the San Diego YWCA by means of the racially separate facilities. They were not willing to grant black women leadership authority in all aspects of the local association.

Another concern board members had was the restructuring of the organization meant that African Americans would lose autonomy within the organization and direct funding. Halsey recognized the value of having a community center distinctly for African Americans in San Diego:

There seems distinct value in having the only social work agency working with Negroes maintain as much identity as possible with direct representation on welfare councils and Chest groups. I should say that the branch membership idea is needed also and that there would be some loss in trying to carry the relationship through a center with the membership and leadership functioning only in the entire association. However, we will consider all these things when the committee gets down to work and the results may not be what I expect.
African American autonomy of the Clay Street Clubs provided them with the financial backing of the YWCA and Community Chest, a distinct meeting place, housing, leadership platform, and paid staff. In turn, African Americans created a space that empowered black girls through recreational activities, assisted black women in discovering their political voices, and searched for temporary employment for black women. Although African Americans were determined to be fully realized as equals, working within a racially separate organization secured their independence in the only community center of its kind for blacks in San Diego.

The white leaders ensured that they did not sacrifice any of their power. In fact, the transition to branch status increased their influence over Clay Street Clubs. While the San Diego Board was not directly involved in the daily activities at Clay Street Clubs, they owned the facility, had representatives on the Clay Street Clubs Committee of Management, and controlled the majority of their financial support. White leaders accepted black participation in the San Diego YWCA as long as white leaders assumed control of black participation within the organization. By continuing to support racially segregated facilities, unequal leadership, and members’ limited access to the full benefits of YWCA membership, African Americans did not gain influence, and the central association did not lose power to the local association. The Board rejected the center model, but stated they were “ready to confer with the Clay Street group whenever they are ready...
to present the necessary qualifications for branch status.”

In April 1941, the San Diego Board welcomed “a closer relationship between the two associations” when Clay Street Clubs was officially accepted as a branch of the San Diego YWCA. Consequently, Clay Street Clubs was renamed the Clay Avenue Branch of the YWCA. This partnership with the San Diego YWCA, although troubled, led to recreational, housing, and employment resources for African American women and girls. To maintain an African American community center in Logan Heights, the black women’s strategy was to work within a racially separate and unequal environment. This did not mean that black women accepted racial inequality. They were determined to use the YWCA’s resources to their advantage to secure a space to politically mobilize, to create a platform for African Americans and women to express themselves, and to support an ignored and overlooked population.

The story continues with African Americans’ struggle to maintain YWCA services at the Clay Avenue Branch in the neighborhood of Logan Heights before it closed in 1951. The closure was in accordance with the National YWCA’s Interracial Charter, which ended segregation within the YWCA. The significance of the origin story of the Clay Avenue Branch is that it identifies black female activism in the early twentieth century and their practical and immediate solutions to racial oppression in San Diego. They established the first and only social services community center for African American women in San Diego at the time.
NOTES


5. “Logan Heights Play Center To Continue,” The San Diego Union, August 18, 1925; “Community Day To Be Feted By Schools,” The San Diego Union, November 15, 1929; “Recreation Pier Will Be Opened To Public Today: Swimming Program, Dance, In Evening Will Feature Long-Awaited Event,” The San Diego Union, July 26, 1929; Rebecca Craft was the director of the


9. Eva Bowles made the recommendation that they begin holding meetings in their churches. The Young People’s Community Center opened in Logan Heights in 1925 and was directed by Rebecca Craft. Eva Bowles to Ornie Branford and Margaret O’Connell, Letter, November 9, 1925; “History of Clay Avenue Branch YWCA,” Letter, 1948; San Diego YWCA Newsletter, “Clay Street Center Girl Reserves” (June 1933); “Descriptive Report of the Clay Street Clubs” (January 1940). The group was also referred to as the “Colored Girl Reserves,” San Diego YWCA Board of Directors Minutes: “Negro Center,” March 16, 1933, YWCA Records, SDSU; Google Maps show that they were next to each other. https://www.google.com/maps/place/2905+Clay+Ave,+San+Diego,+CA+92113/@32.7029534,-117.1336847,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x80d953748f3d7f9d:0x5319670129f6ad6b (accessed July 22, 2014). There was also a sizable number of Latinos, a few whites, and Japanese Americans. Cristin M. McVey, “Traces of Black San Diego, 1890-1950” (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2004), 52.


13. Thelma Gorham Thompson, student at San Diego State University, was the advisor of the Higher Thinking Triangle at Memorial Junior High School. “Girl Reserves,” The San Diego Union, October 21, 1933; San Diego YWCA Newsletter, “Clay Street Center Girl Reserves,” June 1933, YWCA Records, SDSU; “Mrs. Craft in San Diego, Cal., Makes Race Relations Hum,” Speech, Walter L. McDonald, NAACP Branch Files. In 1931, “The Negro in History” Course was created for young and old adults, taught on Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m. at San Diego High School by Antoinette W. Powers. “School Offers Course on `Negro in History,’” The San Diego Union, April 9, 1931; Octavia Payne Coleman graduated from SDSU with a BA in Music. She sang in The San Diego Harmony Singers “colored chores,” under D.V. Allen’s management. She was also a charter member of Hampton’s Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (Beta Kappa). “Music at the Churches” The San Diego Union, January 12, 1929; Marguerite E. Bowly, “Adult Education Classes,” The San Diego Union, December 7, 1936; “Beta Kappa: Octavia Coleman,” The San Diego Union, December 7, 1936. Coleman’s family had attended Bethel Baptist Church since the 1930s. They migrated to San Diego from Texas. Delphina McPherson, phone interview by Charla Wilson, August 15, 2014.


16. Board of Directors Meetings, June 18, 1936, December 1935 or January 1936; San Diego YWCA Newsletter, “Our Youngest Child is Growing Up,” April 1935, YWCA Records, SDSU. There were some members of Clay Street Clubs, possibly parents, who disapproved of a branch transition. The reasons are unknown. However, I speculate it was because members would be required to pay an annual fee. Considering this transition took place during the Great Depression, this possibly deterred African Americans from YWCA participation. It is also possible that African Americans were aware of white YWCA opposition. “History of Clay Avenue Branch YWCA, Report, 1948, YWCA Records, SDSU.


20. Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, April 21, 1938. The San Diego Trust and Savings Bank considered this a fair price after they appraised the property at $3,960. Seaman paid a monthly mortgage fee, committing to $100 monthly, $50 toward the mortgage, and $50 for operating expenses. “Gifts,” Report, date unknown, possibly 1942; Clay Avenue Audit, November 18, 1938, YWCA Records, SDSU.


A Monument To An Event That Never Happened

By Roger Newton

La Punta de los Muertos is marked by State Registered Landmark No. 57 placed by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and the Historical Markers Committee in 1954 at the southeast corner of Market Street and Pacific Highway facing San Diego Bay.

The plaque reads:

La Punta de los Muertos (Dead Men’s Point). Burial site of sailors and marines in 1782 when San Diego Bay was surveyed & charted by Don Juan Pantoja y Arriaga, pilot, and Don José Tovar, mate, of the royal frigates “La Princesa” and “La Favorita” under command of Don Agustín de Echeverría.¹

But according to the ships’ logs, this fleet was under the command of Esteban José Martínez with Juan Pantoja as second pilot on La Princesa. La Favorita sailed under first pilot Juan Agustín de Echeverría and Josef Tovar second pilot. Tovar did not participate in the survey even though he was a member of the party. These were supply ships; there were no marines, only sailors (marineros).²

Roger Newton is a former technical writer who enjoys research into diseases encountered by Spaniards coming to California by sea and land. He has studied the effects of scurvy vs. deaths from epidemic diseases on early voyages. He also has identified medicinal plants and their uses during the 18th century.
Located in a folder for this Registered Landmark No. 57, *La Punta de los Muertos, San Diego County*, is a paper written by James Nebergall and edited by Clark Wing under the auspices of the Works Projects Administration and sponsored by the State of California, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, in 1939. The writers were intent on proving that this location was a burial site of sailors who died in 1782, and who were there because the dead of the 1769 Exposition were also there. The graves of those who died aboard the two ships *San Carlos* and *San Antonio* in 1769 have never been located. Nebergall only mentions “the Pantoja Expedition” on pages 31-35, and names William Heath Davis, Jr. as his source. But Davis actually wrote:

> Andrew B. Gray, the chief engineer and surveyor for the United States, who was with the commission, introduced himself to me one day at Old Town. In February, 1850, he explained to me the advantages of the locality known as “Punta de los Muertos” from the circumstance that in the year 1782 a Spanish squadron anchored... surveying the bay of San Diego for the first time, several sailors and marines died and were interred on a sand spit, adjacent to where my wharf stood, and was named as above. ... Messrs. José Antonio Aguirre, Miguel Pedrorena, Andrew B. Gray, T.D. Johns and myself were the projectors and original proprietors of what is now known as the City of San Diego.

In 1852 Gray was recruited by the Texas Western Railroad to lead a survey from San Antonio to California; his journal reads like part travel log. Then, for no stated reason, he wrote out of context:

> In 1782 it [the bay] was surveyed by Don Juan Pantoja, second pilot or navigator of the Spanish fleet. The Spanish fleet anchored seven miles above the entrance, and at a point where the channel lies close to the shore, which they named Punta de los Muertos, from burying...
a number of the crew there, who had died from scurvy, contracted on the voyage.\textsuperscript{5}

This is the first time the word scurvy is used in connection with the 1782 expedition. Gray did not note his source. His 1850 map does not have a "Dead

\textit{Plano del Puerto de San Diego surveyed by Juan Pantoja, 1782. ©SDHC #2905.}
Men’s Point.” Gray was one of the first to join the Confederacy and was one the first in the Civil War to die, April 16, 1862. He was the sole source of this “scurvy” tale.

In his Log, Juan Pantoja tells when he names a place and why, but he never mentions Punta de los Muertos only Punta de los Guijarros (Ballast Point). In the English translation the word “deadmen” is used, but that refers to a mooring log on shore to which the ship could be tied. Engineer Miguel Costansó, the 1769 expedition chief of cartography and surveying, does not mention Punta de los Muertos; it is not on his map. It is not on the 1792 Map of the Port of San Diego from the expedition of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra." It does appear on the 1839 map of the Port of San Diego made by English Captain John Hall.7

The diaries of almost every California voyage, including these, tell of lost anchors. Those of Pantoja and Martínez tell that in ports, logs were buried upright on the beach where deep water was close to shore and to which ships tied up, as if docked. Those logs were called “deadmen” (muertos). The deeper water channel runs close to shore at Punta de los Muertos, where it drops off sharply to six fathoms (that is why the
piers are there now), so there could have been “deadmen” buried on that beach. The Point of those deadmen could be on the map to mark their location for other ships.\textsuperscript{8}

The word scurvy that is used for the deaths of seamen in San Diego in 1769 is incorrect; the illness was not caused by poor diet lacking in Vitamin C, it was caused by “mal de loanda,” a contagious intestinal disease.\textsuperscript{9} By the 1700s surgeons were taught medicine, and were considered doctors. While \textit{La Favorita’s} surgeon treated the sick, \textit{La Princesa} surgeon searched for medicinal and food plants, which he found. All except two of \textit{Princesa’s} seamen recovered. The dead were buried on the beach. In the official reports the illness was not named, and may have been an endemic indigenous disease from the natives. It was not always the case that the Spaniards brought a disease that killed the natives; at times it was a native disease that killed the Spanish newcomers. But the \textit{Princesa} dead were buried on a beach and an officer did use the word scurvy.

The \textit{Santiago} made the 1779 supply trip under Esteban Martínez. In his \textit{Diario}
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de Navegación the only mention of scurvy is that he left a jar of pitahaya syrup to treat it at Monterey, and that there was no scurvy in San Diego. On September 9, after much maneuvering, they anchored (i.e. no “deadmen”) in San Diego. According to Martínez, it was two leagues, 5.26 miles, south of the presidio. Punta de los Muertos is 4.6 miles south of the presidio, which raises the possibility that he unloaded there because La Playa (the Beach) at Point Loma is southwest of the presidio. Part of their load was 73 pine logs from Monterey, as the trees in San Diego provided poor building material. Some of these logs became “deadmen.”

In 1782 La Princesa and La Favorita had supply duty. As fleet commander, Esteban Martínez recorded in his diary certain details of the voyage, such as that the water at Monterey was not drinkable. As second in command, Pantoja was in charge of Princesa’s navigation and the surveys. He records those details; there is no mention of scurvy in either. On May 13 at 4 pm, they anchored in San Diego; the next day they tied up to the “deadmen;” after rest for the crew, they unloaded cannons and supplies.

On September 12 at sunset, Pantoja anchored the launch off Otay Creek to start at the eastern shore; 14 natives came, sold fish, and stayed most of the night. In the morning, they went to fill their water barrels and took soundings; 90-100 natives from that ranchería came to see them. Anchoring at the next sunset, Pantoja wrote “south of ranchería de Choyas,” as if it had already been named. Twenty-five natives came out and sold them fish and chicken. On September 14, Saturday, Pantoja boarded the Princesa at sunset. “No trouble of any kind had been experienced.” Sunday would have been spent ashore for mass and dinner. On September 19, Phelipe Bernal, master caulker of La Favorita, was buried at the mission church, taken there before Pantoja returned. Pantoja finished his map September 28. This part of the Martínez diary is missing, or may not have been written, since Martínez gave the men leave and nothing happened. Pantoja was charting, and the diaries of Echeverría and Tovar are unavailable, so this all happened in the week of September 7 to September 14. Fresh food would have been brought to them and if anyone had scurvy, they would have been taken to the presidio or to the mission. Bernal was the only one from these ships to die here.

Beginning with historians Hubert Howe Bancroft and San Diego Judge Benjamin Hayes, most historians assume that Punta de los Muertos derived its name from being the 1769 burial site. Commander Vicente Vila of the San Carlos wrote that it was “… on a small hill immediate to the beach and a gun shot from the boats.” The beach shown on the Pantoja map is now Pacific Highway. It turns west at Washington Street, which bows south where the river mouth was. The ships were as close as they could get to it, anchored at the north side of the deep-water channel according to the Pantoja map.
The map Costansó drew shows the ships about west of where the Lindbergh Field Air Traffic Control Tower is today. About a “gun shot” (1000 yards) due east of there, the ridge along the west face of the San Diego Mesa, caused by the Rose Canyon Fault, bows upward and crests in the 3300 block of India Street. It is the only hill between Washington Street and Punta de los Muertos. Fray Juan Crespi wrote that the dead were “buried on the shore where the camp was established.” It was most likely near Pacific Highway and Sassafras Street. Crespi wrote that “they were all transferred about a league to the north…” A league was 2.63 miles; from 3350 India Street to Presidio Park is 2.4 miles. All subsequent deaths were no doubt buried there.

On the 1845 Alcalde Captain Santiago Arguello-Captain Henry D. Fitch San Diego pueblo map, Punta de los Muertos is called Punta Verde (Green Point). “Muertos” is written at Midtown where the initial dead of 1769 were buried before the move to Presidio Hill. The word “Muertos” (map is deteriorated) originally said Playa de los Muertos; there is no record of los Muertos (dead men) of 1769 being exhumed. Punta de Los Muertos was a sandbar that extended about 750 feet south from the corner of Market Street and Pacific Highway. And since La Playa extended from the San Diego River to the tip of la punta, it would only be natural for Pantoja to name it “La Punta de Los Muertos” and not take credit.

NOTES

1. The plaque is wrong on all counts. There is no burial site and no one died on the Pantoja voyage. See Geraldine V. Sahyun, translator, Richard S. Whitehead, editor, The Voyage of the Frigate Princesa to Southern California in 1782 as Recorded in the logs of Juan Pantoja y Arriaga and Esteban José Martínez, Santa Barbara: Mission Archive-Library, 1982.

2. Ibid.

3. In 1931 Assembly Bill 171 authorized the Department of Natural Resources to establish a California Historical Landmark Registration Program providing for the designation of privately and publicly-owned properties. The State Chamber of Commerce was delegated the responsibility of establishing a committee of historians to review landmark applications and make designation recommendations to the State Park Commission. Nebergall says that on 3/6/1932 a bronze marker was dedicated by the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West at Punta de los Muertos; the registration date was 12/6/1932.

4. William Heath Davis, Jr., Sixty years in California, a history of events and life in California; personal, political and military, under the Mexican regime; during the quasi-military government of the territory by the United States, and after the admission of the state into the union, being a compilation by a witness of the events described. San Francisco: A.J. Leary, 1889; p. 552.


Hall got the name from a Pantoja map.

8. The dead men, these dead men, those dead men—all in Spanish are los muertos.

9. In all their documents of the 1769 expedition, Franciscan missionaries Fray Junípero Serra, Fray Juan Crespi, and the overall commander, Gaspar de Portolá y Rovira, wrote it was “mal de loanda.” The missionaries knew medicine; they had a duty to look after these men physically as well as spiritually. So while “mal de loanda” may have contributed to scurvy, it was not itself scurvy.


11. The pitahaya/pitaya saguaro cactus grows in Baja California Sur (South). The fruit is often as large as a peach (dragon fruit, seasonally available in Hispanic and farmers markets). The bright red juice has 4mg vitamin C per 100 grams; sugar added to preserve it makes pitahaya syrup.

12. The average amount of vitamin C in 100g of fish is 2mg raw; cooked in dry heat is 1mg. This rancheria had always been friendly. Probably the Choyas sold food to the presidio and were given chickens to breed. Many worked at or for the presidio, or sold goods or services to the men, or were married to them. In Richard F. Pourade, The Explorers, the 1786 revised 1782 Pantoja map is on p. 149. Rancheria Otay is missing, and Rancheria de Choyas is located where it was in 1782, although by then it had relocated to Florida Canyon. Lower left below the line is printed “Cardano lo grabó” (engraved it), on the lower right below the line is “Morata lo escr.” (wrote it).

13. San Diego burial records at the San Diego History Center and The Huntington Library, Early California Population Project Database, 2006, for both churches, August 21 to October 6, 1782. They also show five natives of the mission and the young son of Segundo Valenzuela buried there.


BOOK REVIEWS


Reviewed by Doris S. Morgan Rueda, M.A., Independent Scholar.

The American Southwest, a region extending from Texas to southern California—and that under the broader term “Borderlands” includes northern Mexico—presents historians with a unique challenge. It is a region that has been claimed by no less than four nations and has been home to a large number of indigenous tribes. The Borderlands force traditional historians to reexamine ideas of nationality and culture. Contesting the Borderlands proposes using an interdisciplinary approach to the region’s complex history.

In Contesting the Borderlands, editors Deborah and Jon Lawrence take on the challenge of writing an interdisciplinary text using the novel approach of compiling interviews. Yet neither has specialized training in any of the fields represented. A physicist and English professor by training, the Lawrences provide edited interviews with historians, ethnographers, and archeologists to explore the prehistory and colonial history of the American Southwest. The blended specialties and methodologies provide a well-rounded understanding of the Borderlands while concurrently creating a text that is accessible to a range of readers. The interviews are organized chronologically and each is preceded by a contextual overview which serves as a summary of the relevant information and historiography. These summaries are absolutely necessary to understanding the concepts and arguments of many of the interviews.

The common theme among the majority of the interviews is the idea of convivencia, defined in an interview with John Kessell as periods of coexistence interspersed with bouts of war and conflict. Beginning in pre-European contact Arizona, readers learn about the nature of inter-tribal warfare and its effects on tribe composition and religion through the interviews with archeologist Steven Leblanc and art historian Polly Schaafsma. Changes in trade, climate, and power relations dramatically altered the tribal landscape of the Southwest prior to any contact with Europeans. The arrival of the Spanish conquistadors only complicated the already complex political environment. Through interviews with academic and non-academic historians, the editors portray the American Southwest as a region rife with competing goals and motives. Even among the Spanish, officials of the Catholic Church were often at odds with secular elite who, public historians
Shirley and Richard Flint argue, were more interested in raising capital than with controlling the native population. The final interviews focus on the Southwest under the control of Mexican and U.S. forces. These chapters reveal the rapidly changing relations among natives, Mexicans, and Americans during a relatively short period of time. Here the theme of *convivencia* is particularly strong, as the interviews focus on the ways these different groups negotiated trade and alliances in order to best meet their needs. However, these unions were dependent upon their ability to provide stability to the respective groups; otherwise, alliances were easily abandoned and made elsewhere with frequency. The nature of these evolving relations is what makes the study of the Borderlands such a complex task.

The book succeeds in blending disciplines and methods into a cohesive text that is accessible and informative. Academics will find the discussions regarding methodology and contributions an interesting read, but these sections are also accessible to non-academic readers. While not present in each interview, the questions regarding conflicting theories are particularly interesting since they offer very frank answers about why each subject agreed or disagreed with a fellow academic. Non-academics will appreciate the careful editing and introductions as they are often necessary for understanding the interview topics. However, there are several places throughout the text where terms, events, and people are brought into conversation without any introduction. These appear to be simple matters that could have been resolved through more thorough editing or adding footnotes, but they may distract readers not familiar with the subject.

*Contesting the Borderlands* does not suggest that it is presenting any new ideas or arguments in the fields of history or archeology. Rather, it stands as a successful example of how interdisciplinary research can be conducted and presented. While the book is not without flaws, Lawrence and Lawrence have crafted a valuable addition to interdisciplinary studies and scholarship on the Borderlands.


Reviewed by Molly McClain, Professor, Department of History, University of San Diego.

Architect Lilian J. Rice (1889-1938) built over one hundred and fifty structures between 1908 and 1938, including eleven buildings now on the National Register
of Historic Places. Best known for her work in Rancho Santa Fe, California, she also designed eighteen homes in La Jolla and dozens of others throughout San Diego County.

A native of National City, California, Rice graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1910 with an undergraduate degree in architecture. She was inspired by the career of Julia Morgan, also a Berkeley graduate, who became the first woman architect licensed in California. Author Diane Y. Welch recounts the stories of Rice’s early years, delving deeply into her family’s history in the region and her years at Berkeley. Spared from the effects of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, the university provided a fertile ground for experimenting with fireproof building materials. In fact, the first house that Rice designed was a wood frame and cement cottage in the Mission style (1908).

Rice is best known for her role in the design and construction of Rancho Santa Fe. She was employment as a drafter in the San Diego-based firm Requa and Jackson when Richard S. Requa asked her to work on the project in 1922. The thirty-three year old became supervisory resident architect for the Santa Fe Land Improvement Company in 1923 and built dozens of structures in the Spanish Revival style, including “La Morada,” now the Inn at Rancho Santa Fe.

Welch extends her account of the development of Rancho Santa Fe provided in her earlier book, *Lilian J. Rice: Architect of Rancho Santa Fe* (2010). She discusses Rice’s trip to Spain in 1925 and includes unique photographs taken by the architect on that journey. She notes Rice’s work in the reconstruction of the Juan María Osuna Adobe in 1924, and reveals work done for celebrities Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Mary Pickford, and Bing Crosby, among others. Welch deserves special credit for interviewing many people who live or lived in structures designed by Rice.

In 1927, Rice opened her own office in Rancho Santa Fe and began to take on projects throughout San Diego. A member and former president of ZLAC Rowing Club, she designed a new clubhouse in Pacific Beach. She also designed a number of houses in La Jolla. The Marguerite M. Robinson House (1929) in La Jolla’s Ludington Heights drew on her knowledge of San Francisco Bay Region domestic architecture with its attention to indigenous materials and local topography. The William S. and Anna R. Bradley House (1930) in the English Tudor style, meanwhile, reflected the owners’ family ties to Britain. Like other architects in the area, Rice worked with the natural environment; she stepped both houses down sloping grades rather than flatten the lots. The Bradley House was the first house built in La Jolla by Ernest Dewhurst, whose family business continues his legacy to this day.

In the early twentieth century, many people designed homes without acquiring an architectural license. They included Edgar V. Ullrich, Clifford M. May, Herbert
E. Palmer, and others designated as “Master Architects” by San Diego’s Historic Resources Board. Rice went through the arduous process of earning a license from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1929. At the time of her death in 1938, she was the only female member of the San Diego chapter of the AIA.

Welch’s extensive research reveals a wealth of photographs and drawings that remain in private hands. She also uncovers flawed documentary evidence that, for years, led people to believe that someone other than Rice had designed the civic center at Rancho Santa Fe. The book concludes with a plea to give the architect “her rightful place in the history books as a career woman and a trailblazer, who paved the way for other up-and-coming architects, both male and female” (p. 162).


Reviewed by Stephen Cox, Professor, Department of Literature, University of California, San Diego.

Throughout American history, Christian institutions have provided ethnic and immigrant groups with agencies of self-identification, self-defense, and social advancement. The most powerful illustration is the crucial role of churches in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, but other examples abound, and deserve more notice than they sometimes receive from historians. In *Race, Religion, and Civil Rights*, Stephanie Hinnershitz examines the role of Christian ideas and institutions in motivating what can be termed civil rights movements among Asians and Asian Americans during the early and mid-twentieth century.

Hinnershitz’s subject is West Coast student groups, often sponsored by the YMCA (then a Christian outreach organization). In these groups, first- and second-generation Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino students came together to advocate Christian ideals of equality and tolerance in opposition to racially-inspired discrimination in housing, employment, and social acceptance. Some of the groups were dominated by young men and women of a single ethnicity; others aimed at, and achieved, sympathetic relations among Asian students generally, while cultivating similar relations with non-Asians. Promotion of ethnic unity was a task for true idealists, considering the different social formations of the various ethnic groups and the actions of the Japanese Empire, aggressive against both China and the Philippines—a reality that threatened to separate Japanese from other students.
Hinnershitz’s work is sound, though limited. Her data base is extensive, and she exploits it thoroughly, but it consists in large part of student journals and newsletters, reports of conferences, copies of resolutions, and similar institutional wares. Little information is provided about broader historical and social contexts. Most regrettable is the absence of any information about the Christian students’ church life or, indeed, their specifically religious life. Churches are assumed to exist, but they are barely noticed; denominations are almost never mentioned, and their significance is never considered. Among the religious and intellectual issues that remain unexplored is pacifism—a major inspiration for many of the students whom Hinnershitz is studying. The students received pacifist ideas from Christian sources, but how, and in what form? On a practical level, how much funding did politically oriented students get from churches and other Christian organizations? What were their difficulties in getting it? The book entertains no such questions.

One gathers from Hinnershitz’s research that for two reasons the Christian students had little practical impact. First, they were, after all, students, operating within the limited context of college life, with little opportunity to affect events. Second, American society was, through much of the period she studies, already on its way to the elimination of gross forms of anti-Asian discrimination. In 1959, the California Intercollegiate Nisei Order, formed by Japanese American students for “the furtherance of racial tolerance,” actually dissolved: “Citing ‘negligible’ occurrences of intolerance against Japanese following the war, the leaders and members believed that the ‘serious work’ of CINO was complete, since few students reported incidents of racism or discrimination on or off campus” (p. 180).

But the point Hinnershitz wants to make is that the students’ “interracial and Christian” advocacy, proceeding in virtual isolation from the interracial activity of the American Left, of which so much has been written, “preceded the type of racial liberalism that historians argue was a product of” World War II (p. 173). This is an important historical issue, and about it Hinnershitz has made a very good case. As she observes, it is time for historians to think critically about how they “tend to identify an activist by using certain standards (such as radicalism and leftist)” that impose unwarranted restrictions on their vision of the past (p. 211).
EXHIBIT REVIEW


Reviewed by Craig Carlson, Lecturer, School of Art Design & Art History, San Diego State University.

One of the great pleasures of being a large-format photographer is to view your subject on a large ground glass. Even though the image is upside down and backwards to the eye, the photographer now sees the world as a cathedral of light and shadow—he or she experiences the creative moment with both eyes wide open.

The 100th anniversary of the National Park System is being celebrated by the Museum of Photographic Arts with a small group of images made by photographers who first pointed their large-format cameras at our American cathedrals. The handful of photographs represented in the exhibit is a history lesson of photography’s pioneers of the western landscape and native peoples.

These early explorers of our soon-to-be national parks were not only drawn by unexplored wilderness but also by the possibility of imaging a subject few had seen and fewer had access to. Our National Parks System stands today as one of the greatest gifts that our republic has bequeathed to its citizens and holds in trust for generations to come. Those who captured the first images of these places rightly deserve celebration alongside the parks themselves, as these photographers publicized the spectacular landscapes but also set in motion the movement to preserve them. Our National Parks System, where we take our children to visit and can teach them the necessity of the wilderness, balances precariously between access and preservation.

Carleton Watkins came to the California gold fields in 1851. After a series of jobs he became an assistant to a San Francisco daguerreotypist where he learned the arts of being a photographer. In 1861, Watkins did find gold of a different type when he began to photograph Yosemite Valley with a mammoth 18x22-inch glass plate view camera. These large-format photographs hold incredible detail and tonal range and were seen by senators and congressmen. These photographs led President Abraham Lincoln to sign a bill in 1864 that transferred the Yosemite Valley to the state of California with the stipulation that the lands be preserved for public recreational use. Watkins’s work helped ensure that Yosemite Valley would never be broken, infringed, or dishonored, thus paving the way for our National Park System.
Another explorer and photographer of the West with a print in the exhibit is John K. Hillers. Hillers came to America in 1852 and worked first as a policeman and then a soldier during the Civil War. After the war he re-enlisted and served in the western garrisons until 1870. While working as a teamster in Salt Lake City, he met John Wesley Powell, who had explored the Green and Colorado Rivers. In 1871 Powell retraced his exploration, but this time used Hillers as the expedition photographer, resulting in views of the two rivers.

Hillers’s introduction to the West as a photographer began a career of documenting the cultures of the Navajo, Zuni, and Paiute tribes. He was especially talented in posing Native Americans in their tribal clothing and supportive artifacts like pottery, blankets, and rifles. When studying a larger collection of his sunlit exterior-made portraits, they take on a surreal quality as if made for a 20th century fashion magazine.

As the centennial of the National Park Service draws to a close, visitors to the Museum of Photographic Arts will have a welcome opportunity to reflect on a formative time in the history of both wilderness preservation and American photography.

BOOK NOTES


Empire Maker examines Baranov’s tenure in America, in the process highlighting Russian expansion along the Pacific Coast and the complex interactions among Native Americans, Russians, Spaniards, Britons, and Americans.

Inspiration and Innovation: Religion in the American West (Western History Series). By Todd M. Kerstetter. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. Illustrations and index. xi + 275 pp. $81.95 cloth. $26.95 paper. $21.99 digital. In this textbook Kerstetter places religion into the historical narrative of the American West and the West into the discussion of religious studies. Inspiration and Innovation examines Western history from pre-contact to the present and includes consideration of Indigenous beliefs, Russian Orthodox Christianity, Mormonism, Hispanic Catholicism, and Judaism. The text shows the relationship between religion and the region through diverse groups of people, places, and events.

Leaders of the Mexican American Generation: Biographical Essays. Edited by Anthony Quiroz. Foreword by Arnoldo De León. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016. Preface, illustrations, and index. 368 pp. $34.95 cloth. $24.95 cloth. $19.95 digital. Leaders of the Mexican American Generation is a collection of 13 biographical essays covering a broad spectrum of Mexican Americans between 1920 and 1965, including labor activists, scholars, intellectuals, as well as legal and political leaders. Their stories shed light not only on the role this generation played shaping Mexican American identity in general, but American civil rights in particular.

Showdown in the Big Quiet: Land, Myth, and Government in the American West. By John P. Bieter, Jr. Foreword by Gordon Morris Bakken. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2015. Illustrations, maps, and index. xviii + 292 pp. $70 cloth. $39.95 paper. While the Big Quiet, a large and sparsely populated region of Owyhee County, Idaho, may not at first seem an obvious choice of historical inquiry, Bieter shows how centuries of struggle over its use reveal broader themes of Western history, in particular the role of government and notions of American identity. Bieter argues that those contesting the land embraced the power of western mythology, with its notions of rugged individualism, violence, and democracy, a direct challenge to the ascendancy of the “New” Western history into the American imagination.
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The San Diego History Center gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the Robert D.L. Gardiner Foundation and the Quest for Truth Foundation for their ongoing support of The Journal of San Diego History

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